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Egypt arrests 29 Brotherhood members

CAIRO (AP) — Police have arrested 29 members of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest outlawed fundamentalist group, officials said Saturday. State Security forces arrested the group late Friday because they were preparing "a future action plan" for the Brotherhood, the officials said without giving further details. The Muslim Brotherhood is officially banned but had been tolerated until the government began a tough crackdown against the group in 1995, arresting hundreds of its members and putting dozens on trial before special military tribunals. The government accuses the Brotherhood of supporting militants launching a violent campaign against the government since 1992 to set up an Islamic state in Egypt. The Brotherhood says it denounces violence. Among those arrested Friday were five journalists and a lawyer, who were picked up from the office of the lawyer, Abdul Moniem Metwally, in the Giza province outside of Cairo, said the officials.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
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King undergoes successful prostate surgery ahead of meeting Netanyahu



ROCHESTER (Agencies) — His Majesty King Hussein underwent prostate surgery Saturday ahead of a round of bedside diplomacy with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. King Hussein's private physician Dr. Samir Farraj said: "The operation was successful and there were no complications whatsoever." "The surgeons removed an enlarged portion of the King's prostate gland which was causing the King some difficulties," Dr. Farraj told Jordan Television. He added that "the operation was one hundred per cent successful," and that "the hospital has taken some samples for culture and the results did not reveal any malignant tumour." King Hussein, who met with President Bill Clinton in Washington Tuesday, was to hold a two-hour bedside meeting with the visiting Israeli premier late Sunday.

Israeli officials said Mr. Netanyahu would seek to enlist King Hussein's support for accelerated talks towards final peace between Israel and Palestinians in view of the current negotiation impasse. King Hussein has been a regular visitor to the Mayo Clinic since August 1992 when he underwent a successful cancer surgery. The King has since returned to Mayo Clinic for annual checkups and has been pronounced free of cancer. His last visit took place on March 23 when he underwent a series of routine tests that again turned up no traces of cancer, clinic officials said. "Four and a half years after King Hussein's operation following the discovery of cancerous cells, all medical examinations have declared him completely cured and no trace of cancerous cells has been found," Dr. Farraj said last month. "It was a routine operation for a

benign enlargement of the prostate. His Majesty went through the operation without any problems and he is resting quite comfortably right now," said Mayo's Dr. David Barrett, who conducted the surgery. "This has no relation to the previous operation, the surgeon is the same but the operation is different, and the problem is different. At this point I am very satisfied. Obviously any one who undergoes an operation must wait for a time to recover and to make sure every thing goes well. But at the initial stages we are very pleased," he said. Asked if there would be any complications after the surgery, Dr. Farraj said: "It is natural after any operation, complication might occur. For this reason, the King will remain in hospital for almost a week. Most complica-

Following is the text of a statement issued by Mayo Clinic on behalf of Lieutenant General Dr. Samir Farraj, private physician of His Majesty King Hussein: "HIS MAJESTY King Hussein of Jordan is resting comfortably this morning following successful prostate surgery at Mayo Clinic. "Surgeons performed an hour-long procedure known as a transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) to correct a benign enlargement of the prostate gland (benign prostatic hyperplasia, or BPH). "According to His Majesty's private physician, Dr. Samir Farraj, King Hussein was awake during the operation and went through the surgery 'without problems or discomfort of any kind.' "The surgery was performed by David Barrett, M.D., a urologic surgeon at Mayo Clinic. Dr. Farraj participated in

the procedure, along with a team of other Mayo physicians and allied health professionals. "Dr. Barrett said there was 'no evidence of any cancer — none whatsoever.' Both Dr. Barrett and Dr. Farraj said they were 'very satisfied' with the results. There is no relation between this operation and His Majesty's previous operation at Mayo in August 1992. "Physicians expect His Majesty to remain at Rochester Methodist Hospital (part of Mayo Medical Center) for three to five days. Following that, his physicians recommend restricted physical activity for three to four weeks. "Transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) is the surgical procedure most often chosen by urologists to decrease the size of an enlarged prostate. The procedure usually relieves all of the symptoms caused by the enlarged prostate without complications."

(Continued on page 7)

Turkish minister denies insulting Germans

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Interior Minister Meral Akseer whose reported remarks that Germans were out to burn Turks caused a controversy between Ankara and Bonn on Saturday denied having insulted the German nation. "My remarks have been incorrectly reflected by the media," Ms. Akseer said in a written statement, adding she had never targeted the German authorities or the German nation.

Ben Laden leaves Jalalabad

ISLAMABAD (R) — Exiled Saudi Arabian dissident Osama Ben Laden has left Afghanistan's eastern city of Jalalabad, where he has been living, for an unknown destination, an Afghan news service said on Saturday. The private Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), quoting sources in Jalalabad, said the Taliban movement flew Mr. Ben Laden and his supporters on Thursday to an unknown area, probably still in Afghanistan. AIP said

'Saudi admits Hizbollah membership'

MONTREAL (AFP) — A Saudi man held in Canada for his alleged role in the bombing of U.S. barracks in Saudi Arabia last year has admitted being a member of the Saudi Hizbollah, the Toronto Star said Saturday. Hani Abdul Rahim Hussein Al Sayegh reportedly said in an interview from an Ottawa prison that while he had belonged to the group, he dropped out before the June 1996 attack because of disagreements with members.

Somali factions set final conference

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Twenty-six Somali factions meeting here since Friday have agreed to hold a final national reconciliation conference in Bosaso in north-eastern Somalia on June 10, a conference spokesman said on Saturday. Mohammad Ramadhan Arbow, information secretary for the National Salvation Council, representing the 26 participating factions, told AFP after the two-day meeting that 1,000 delegates will be invited to attend the Bosaso conference. The conference will appoint a transitional parliament to draft a transitional charter to govern Somalia for an interim period before elections are held. Mr. Arbow said. He expressed the hope that faction leader Hussein Aided and Mohammad Ibrahim Egal, president of the breakaway Republic of Somaliland, will join the Bosaso meeting.

Jordanian-Palestinian fund to counter Israeli actions in Arab East Jerusalem

Crown Prince, in message to founding meeting, stresses need to preserve Arab and Muslim identity of Holy City

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Palestinian and Jordanian businessmen on Saturday announced a \$100 million fund to be invested in Arab East Jerusalem in a bid to counter Israeli settlement plans in the occupied city. "The Jerusalem Fund for Joint Investment Company (JJFIC)," which was formed by more than 100 Palestinian and Jordanian businessmen, is aimed at "reactivating business life for Arab residents in Jerusalem as well as buying Arab lands in the Holy City," said Abdul Majid Shoman, a shareholder and chairman of board of directors of the Arab Bank. Mr. Shoman told reporters that the company will build agricultural, tourist and housing investments in the Holy City in order to create job opportunities for the Arab residents of Jerusalem. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, told the one-day "Meeting for Jerusalem," which was held at the Amman Chamber of Industry, that the new firm was necessary to preserve the Arab and Muslim identity of the Holy City. "As you meet for Jerusalem today, in the homeland of all Arabs, I am certain that your priorities will include buttressing the Arab identity of the Holy City," the Regent said in a

message, which was read out by Mr. Shoman. "That can be done by supporting the Arab presence there and working to meet the housing needs of its Arab inhabitants, who are facing the threat of forced emigration and deportation. We must do everything we can to help the Arab people of Jerusalem in these difficult times," the Crown Prince said. "Jerusalem needs our compassion. But it is our solidarity, knowledge and accurate assessments of the needs of Jerusalem that can help us articulate effective measures to protect the city and its Arab Muslim identity," the Regent said. The JJFIC is the first unified private Arab effort to

counter Israeli settlement plans in Jerusalem following the right-wing Israeli government's decision to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. Munib Masri, a member of the three-man founding team which includes Mr. Shoman and Palestinian businessman Hassib Sabagh, said that representatives of the company will tour Arab states, including the Gulf region, to invite investors to join the JJFIC. Mr. Masri said that 20 per cent of the capital was to be collected from Palestinian and Jordanian shareholders during Saturday's gathering. (Continued on page 7)

U.S. is ready to present a new serious formula to Israelis and Palestinians, Tarawneh reports

AMMAN (Petra) — In his talks with U.S. administration officials last week, His Majesty King Hussein felt that Washington has displayed more seriousness and concern over the Middle East crisis than any time in the past, Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh said Saturday. "The U.S. administration has not only manifested its concern over the dangerous situation in the region but rather, its full readiness to seek a formula to be presented to the parties concerned in the issue," stressed Dr. Tarawneh in an interview with Radio Monte Carlo. "The topic that received the most attention in the King's talks in Washington was the stalled Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and the King presented President Bill Clinton with his full assessment of the

situation." According to Dr. Tarawneh, who said the U.S. president did not submit an American initiative to the King to solve the crisis. Dr. Tarawneh said U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright intends to visit the Middle East but no date has been set for the visit. Referring to reports that the U.S. could arrange a three-way Camp David-style talks grouping the U.S., Israel and the Palestinians, Dr. Tarawneh said: "Such ideas were floated but I do not believe that such a meeting could be held soon due to the lack of the minimum level of coordination between the concerned parties at this time." As to the final status negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, the minister said: "We realise that the Palestinians have many

doubts about this issue because not all the provisions of the accord on the transitional stage have yet been executed, neither has Israel's settlement programme been halted." "The Palestinians have the right to demand that all provisions of the agreements should be implemented and Jordan will continue to stand by the Palestinian people and support their endeavours," added Dr. Tarawneh. Dr. Tarawneh expressed hope that the Israeli and Palestinian sides will restore their mutual confidence without which the peace process can by no means be resumed. The Arab summit meeting in Cairo last June, Dr. Tarawneh said, proved that the Arab World's strategic option is peace.

Palestinians serve ultimatum over peace and settlements

No peace talks unless settlements are halted, Arafat tells Clinton in message

Combined agency dispatches

A U.S. PEACE initiative that does not contain a pledge by Israel to stop Jewish settlement building on occupied land is a non-starter, the Palestinian cabinet said Saturday.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat conveyed the same message to President Bill Clinton in a letter, Arafat's advisers said. Mr. Clinton is trying to find ways to restart peace talks that broke off when Israel began construction last month of a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Clinton is to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington on Monday, and Israel Radio reported Saturday that a Palestinian cabinet minister, Hanan Ashrawi, would hold talks with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and the U.S. coordinator for the Middle East, Dennis Ross. Meanwhile, Saturday passed without major stone throwing clashes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, perhaps a sign that Mr. Arafat is lowering tensions ahead of new diplomatic efforts. Since the March 18 start of construction in Arab East Jerusalem, there had been



Palestinian students burn a coffin symbolic of the peace process during a protest rally at Al Azhar University in the Gaza Strip on Saturday (Reuters photo)

daily protests in the West Bank, most organised by activists of Arafat's Fatah movement. On Saturday, dozens of Fatah followers marched peacefully on the campus of a Gaza University. Some carried a burial stretcher wrapped in white paper, with the words "peace process" written on it, and then set it

on fire. Mr. Arafat's letter to Mr. Clinton warned that if the peace process collapsed, Israel and the Palestinians would be headed toward confrontation, Israeli Radio reports said. Both Israel and the Palestinians have set conditions for resuming talks. Israel demands that Mr.

Arafat move decisively to rein in the militants and halt the protests. The Palestinians say Israel must stop settlement construction in Arab East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mr. Arafat's letter said any U.S. plan for restarting the talks would have to

(Continued on page 7)

Arabs and EU demand bigger European role in peace process

DUBAI (Agencies) — Europe must play a more effective and influential role in the Middle East, Arab League and European Union (EU) representatives here said Saturday at the end of their three-day conference on the peace process. In recommendations to the leaders of Arab and European countries, the league and EU representatives said that "this (stronger EU) role has become a joint Arab-European demand and can only be positive, constructive and complimentary to those of the two co-sponsors of the peace process," Russia and the United States. They also expressed their "deep concern regarding the difficulties the peace process has run into because of Israeli obstinacy in setting up settlements in occupied Arab territory, including East Jerusalem."

During the conference, Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid laid the entire blame for the blocked Middle East peace process on the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The start of construction work on a new Jewish set-

tlement in Arab East Jerusalem March 18 led to a collapse in peace talks and triggered a wave of violent protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and three suicide bombings. Six Palestinians and three Israelis have died. EU special Middle East envoy Miguel Angel Moratinos stressed that Mr. Netanyahu's decision to proceed with the construction did not prevent the EU from "continuing without slackening its efforts to restore confidence." The league recommended Monday that its members freeze the normalisation process with Israel because of the new settlement and the Israeli government's policy. Participants in the Dubai conference on European Arab cooperation on the peace process included a hundred Arab and European academics and experts as well as Abdul Meguid and Mr. Moratinos. The conference was organised under the auspices of the crown prince of Dubai and United Arab Emirates defence minister, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashed Al Maktoum. Europe is the main trading partner of the Arab

countries and the second largest foreign investor in the region. The European Union is also the main donor to the Palestinians, and has given them nearly \$1.4 billion since 1987. "The conference expressed deep concern over difficulties facing the peace process as a result of Israel's obstinate positions and its insistence on building settlements on occupied Arab land, including East Jerusalem," the final communique of the conference said. "There is a need to overcome these difficulties in order to achieve a fair and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the Madrid accord and related resolutions by international legitimacy, especially U.N. resolutions...the principle of land-for-peace, the Oslo accord and the Hebron redeployment protocol," the communique added. The communique said "a more effective and influential European role in the peace process has become a joint Arab and European demand...which could only be positive, constructive and complementary to the role of the two sponsors (U.S. and Russia)."

Greece and Italy at odds over force in Albania

ATHENS (R) — Greece and Italy are at odds over the deployment of an Italian-led multinational force in lawless Albania with both sides pushing to deploy their troops in Tirana, key ports and road junctions. Greek officials said on Saturday.

"Every country (in the force) has its own preferences and there are different views from the ones proposed (by Italy)," Defence Minister Akis Tsohatzopoulos told reporters. "In any case nothing will be valid if the governments involved don't agree."

Government officials said Athens was angry with a proposal by the force's Italian command that Greek troops should be stationed in Lezhe, about 90 kilometres northwest of Tirana, while Italians would be in Tirana and the Adriatic port of Vlora.

"Greece believes that the Albanian crisis can't be resolved by dividing the country in zones of influence," a senior government official told Reuters. "Greek troops must be part of the force in Tirana and in other main towns."

Rome has said the 6,000-strong, United Nations-approved force should start deployment in the week starting on April 14.

Albania, rocked by weeks of chaos during which scores of people were killed, has urged the fastest possible deployment to secure the transport and distribution of humanitarian aid and technical aid.

Italy was expected to provide between 2,000 and 2,500 troops, France 1,000, Greece 700, Turkey 500, Romania

400 and Spain 300. Austria and Denmark said they may also participate.

Deployment plans have been overshadowed by the sinking of a packed Albanian refugee vessel off Italy on March 28 in a collision with an Italian navy corvette, causing Albanian anger with Rome and raising extra concern about the troops' safety.

Survivors accused the Italian captain of ramming the boat, something Rome denies. Tirana says that at least 80 people drowned but insists that anti-Italian passions have eased since the sinking.

Prime Minister Costas Simitis on Friday criticised Italy's handling of the refugee wave and urged robust European Union economic and technical support for Albania and other poor Balkan nations.

"When there is hunger and misery the solution is not one ship sinking another," Simitis said in a speech to a European socialist parties meeting. "The solution is to prevent the mass exodus brought by hunger and misery. To make sure other (Balkan) countries don't face misery."

Thousands of Albanian refugees packed ships heading for Italy in the past weeks. Some 350,000 Albanians already live in Greece and Athens has increased patrols across the border with Albania to prevent another mass wave of refugees.

Analysts said Simitis' comments would fuel Greek-Italian antagonism before the final decision on the troops' deployment, expected on



A child releases a pigeon during a rally in the Albanian capital Tirana on Saturday in support of peace. The rally organised by UNICEF was attended by some hundreds of children (Reuters photo)

Monday. Simitis said the EU and NATO should move faster in integrating Balkan nations and that the "immediate response of the union to the recent crisis in Albania was correct, but not sufficient."

State control has collapsed in Albania for the past month with many southern towns controlled by rebel councils. Army and police forces fled amid an armed uprising triggered by anger over the col-

lapse of pyramid savings schemes.

Meanwhile, the leader of a Council of Europe delegation in Tirana said Saturday the Italian-led multi-national force must be deployed "as a matter of the highest urgency."

Rene van der Linden, the council's rapporteur on political affairs on a two-day visit to Tirana, said that while there was an "improved atmosphere" in Albania, "this force

must be deployed as a matter of the highest urgency."

"We have some improvement but it already took too long a time for the deployment of humanitarian aid and the international force," Van der Linden said.

He added that at a meeting Saturday, Albanian President Sali Berisha also called for the process to be speeded up.

Van der Linden and other members of the delegation met

leaders of all the main Albanian political parties, as well as the reconciliation government. He said that security in the country, along with election laws, media and international monitoring and assistance, were discussed.

The head of the delegation reported that leaders of the opposition parties were "quite optimistic" that agreement would be reached on fair access to state media.

Union with Belarus won't hurt Russian reforms — Yeltsin

MOSCOW (Agencies) — President Boris Yeltsin acknowledged concern about human rights violations in neighbouring Belarus on Saturday but said a union with the ex-Soviet republic would not compromise Russia's democratic reforms.

"The Russian mass media are voicing concern about freedom of speech and the press in Belarus," Yeltsin said in a radio address to the nation. "This concern cannot be ignored."

"I would like to assure you with every determination that we will do our best to ensure that the values of democracy, freedom of expression and the press become the common property of the union."

Yeltsin described the union treaty he signed Wednesday with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko as a very significant event in the two slavic neighbours' history.

He rejected speculation that the move to integrate with the weaker economy of Belarus would hurt Russians' living standards. "I tell you firmly: this will not happen," he said.

"We will not retreat in our ally and partner," Yeltsin added.

Unlike Russia, Belarus has hobbled market reforms and much of its economy remains state-controlled.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank have suspended loans to Belarus due to its backsliding on economic reform.

The treaty was signed on the first anniversary of an earlier union pact clinched during Yeltsin's reelection campaign, seen partly as a move to win votes from Russian nationalists nostalgic for the Soviet Union. The latest treaty was also seen as a riposte to NATO's plan to expand eastward, which is strongly opposed by both Yeltsin and Lukashenko.

Before the signing ceremony, Russian liberals and the media voiced concern at the way the union treaty was drawn up, by a small group of government officials, without broad consultation.

The treaty was a watered-down version of the original far-reaching draft, and Yeltsin promised six weeks of public discussion before the detailed "statutes" of the treaty would be signed.

The union accord, which

was largely a declaration of intent, called for economic and defence cooperation, but stressed that both countries would retain their sovereignty.

However, it aroused concern among Russians who feared that Lukashenko, an authoritarian leader who has muzzled political opponents, could spread his influence to Russia itself.

In his radio address, Yeltsin said integration could "help Belarus to catch up with us quicker where we have moved ahead."

While acknowledging that Belarus lagged behind Russia in economic development and the establishment of a law-based state, Yeltsin stressed that Russia "will not sacrifice what has been achieved during this difficult period of reforms."

Police in the Belarusian capital Minsk arrested up to 50 people protesting against the union treaty the day it was signed.

At least 5,000 people took part in the demonstration led by the opposition Belarus Popular Front, which was broken up by police, as were previous protests against

Lukashenko's policies.

The Russian foreign ministry voiced concern about the clashes and injuries sustained by Russian journalists in Minsk, ITAR-TASS news agency reported Saturday.

Ministry spokesman Gennady Tarasov recalled that Belarus, like other European countries, had "undertaken to protect the free flow of information."

Yeltsin said everyone in Russia should have the opportunity to voice an opinion about the union treaty with Belarus.

"Having heard the most varied opinions we will be able to correct the statutes of the Russian-Belarusian union so that it corresponds to the common interests of our peoples as much as possible," he said.

In a bid to ease concern about the treaty voiced in other former Soviet republics, Yeltsin insisted that it did not set Russia apart from its other partners in the 12-nation Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

"We will continue to develop and strengthen relations with CIS members," he said. Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma said Monday the

union was "absurd" and would entail the destruction of the CIS, which the three countries created in December 1991, days before the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Yeltsin sacks aide

Meanwhile, ITAR-TASS Saturday reported that Yeltsin sacked his top foreign policy aide over his handling of the union treaty Belarus last week.

On Friday the Kremlin said Yeltsin had relieved Dmitry Ryukov of his duties after nearly six years coordinating foreign policy in the presidential administration.

"(Yeltsin) was extremely dissatisfied with the level of documents offered for signature by the presidents of Russia and Belarus on April 2," TASS quoted a Kremlin source as saying.

"Dmitry Ryukov was one of those in the president's administration who was directly responsible for the preparation of the documents linked with Russian-Belarusian integration," it said, quoting the source.

S. Lanka says no foreign mediation to end war

COLOMBO (R) — The Sri Lankan government said on Saturday that a British-assisted bipartisan agreement signed this week to work towards ending the country's ethnic war was not a prelude to foreign mediation in the matter.

"The government was not contemplating mediation or facilitation by any foreign government or third party at this point of time," Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was quoted as saying in a release issued by the ministry.

Kadirgamar made the comments when he addressed local newspaper editors on Friday about an agreement signed the day before by Sri Lanka's ruling People's Alliance and the main opposition United National Party (UNP) to work together to end the 13-year-old war with separatist Tamil rebels.

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga and opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe agreed on Thursday to take a "common approach" to end the country's war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Kadirgamar said Britain had played an important role in the settlement between the two parties.

"While acknowledging the help given by the British in forging the people's alliance-UNP understanding," Kadirgamar said, "implementation of this agreement is entirely a national matter," the foreign ministry statement said.

The agreement was also widely seen as a move that would usher in fresh peace talks with the rebels.

But the statement quoted Kadirgamar as saying there was no plan at this point of time for talks with the LTTE.

"The government has consistently expressed willingness to open a dialogue with the LTTE, subject to conditions including a substantial laying down of arms and an agreement to arrive at a settlement within a stipulated time frame," the statement said.

Clock starts counting out the century by the second

GREENWICH, England (AP) — Three years to go, but from now on the millennium countdown clock is counting out the 20th century by the second.

To shooting fireworks and cheers from guests at a champagne party, London's lord mayor, Roger Cork, unveiled the clock at midnight Friday.

It is set in the courtyard of the royal observatory, on a hill overlooking London.

For more than 100 years Greenwich, 10 kilometres east of central London, has been the home of the Prime Meridian, the imaginary line by which Greenwich Mean Time, the time around the world, is set.

And Greenwich is making the most of its special position.

"It (millennium fever) is something that we've made to start and it's growing and growing fast," said Mike Bullions, development director of the Greenwich Meridian 2000, a body supervising overall celebrations.

The countdown clock, reputed to be accurate to the millionth of a second,

immediately began tracking the seconds in bright red digital lights.

Organisers of millennium events hope the time-factor will draw hundreds of thousands of visitors.

"We want to make sure that at least once in every one's life time, they come to Greenwich and stand on the Prime Meridian," said Kristen Lippincott, who is directing millennium projects at the National Maritime Museum.

The museum has chosen Greenwich, Connecticut as a partner city for the celebrations.

On Saturday, the Royal Observatory, styled the "Home of Time," was holding a public day of celebrations.

The first 6,000 cases of French-made millennium wine, from a vineyard in Bordeaux, go on sale.

The Greenwich 2000 committee is selling millennium sponsorships to corporations.

In January, the government gave the final go-ahead for a 580 million-pound (\$957 million) millennium exhibition, to be built on Greenwich peninsula, a derelict site bound-

Computer chaos looms as 2000 nears

PARIS (AFP) — Your computer might be able to do all kinds of neat things these days. But can it cope with a simple thing like a year that goes by the number 2000?

Many computer experts fear not. With 1,000-odd days to go before a new millennium gets underway, they say computer programmes must be rewritten — and fast — to handle the switch.

It's a task that could involve billions of dollars and a lot of headaches, they said.

"It's not just about rewriting programmes for slightly aging computers. In many cases, an entire corporate computer system will have to be worked over," said Serge Kampf, head of Cap Gemini, a European leader in computer servicing.

Do save on memory and data processing, computers and programmes from the 1970s and 1980s were designed to understand dates in double-digit terms.

Thus they cannot distinguish whether "00" means 1900 or 2000 — and the knock-on results could well mean computers that crash and programme applications that gum up.

Especially prone to "total chaos" are expensive computers used for airline reservations, banking networks and pension funds, said Rob Wirsicz, chairman of a crisis unit set up last year by the British government to look into the

issue.

Some other governments think the problem is not so serious, as in many instances aging computer programmes will be updated before Jan. 1, 2000 by ones which can think in four-digit years.

Computer firms are stepping up sophisticated methods to identify 2000-prone programmes, but the very speed at which the industry changes is causing problems.

The first management programmes, written in such languages as Cobol, have in many cases been preserved by their users, albeit upgraded over the years.

Experts say 80 billion lines of Cobol-written programming still exist. Problem is, it is considered a dinosaur language now, and programmers who can handle it are few — and pricey.

"It is not only management programmes that are going to crash," said Frederique Huynh of the French Computing Security Club.

"Telephone switchboards are going to stop transferring calls, 'intelligent buildings' will stop letting people enter with their passes, water and electricity supplies will be cut off," she said. If nothing is done, U.S. experts estimate, the cost to the global economy of 2000-related computer breakdowns will run in excess of \$500 billion.

dome, the centerpiece of the exhibition. It will be the world's largest dome, twice the size of the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

NEWS IN BRIEF

11 killed in Algeria road accident

ALGIERS (AFP) — Eleven people were burned to death and 10 were seriously injured in a road smash at Ain Beida, in eastern Algeria, the daily newspaper Al Moudjahid said Saturday. Two coaches crammed with passengers collided and burst into flames in the accident which happened on Friday, the paper said.

Blackened thief paraded through Kabul

KABUL (AFP) — Afghan Taleban soldiers Saturday paraded a youth accused of stealing money through Kabul's city centre, smothering his face with soot and slapping him in front of more than one hundred onlookers, AFP witnessed. "Anybody stealing three lakhs (around \$13) will be punished like this," one of the young militiamen shouted as another two Taleban fighters struggled to keep the alleged culprit upright on a wooden trolley. Onlookers watched with indifference as the accused — no older than 12 years old — wrestled in vain to hide his face while being wheeled through a crowded market place and made to clutch a banknote with an outstretched arm. His weak attempts at avoiding humiliation only brought more slaps to the face and hair pulling from the militiamen. The soldiers continued the ritual by rubbing large quantities of soot onto his already blackened face. The Taleban's designated punishment for theft is the chopping off of a hand or foot, but judging by the light nature of the boy's alleged crime this is not likely to be imposed.

Armenia hands over 4 Azeri soldiers

YEREVAN (AFP) — Armenia on Saturday handed over four Azerbaijani soldiers, in a unilateral move supervised by the Red Cross. The soldiers, arrested nine months ago after they crossed the border by mistake, were flown from Yerevan to Baku on a Red Cross plane. Zoran Jovanovic, chief representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Armenia, told AFP: "I cannot speak of an exchange of prisoners-of-war, since this is a unilateral initiative by Armenia." "According to our lists, there are no more POWs in Armenia, but we are not sure that this is really the case."

Singapore school bans brand watches

SINGAPORE (R) — A Singapore school has banned brand name watches on campus to teach students not to be vain, the Chinese-language Lianhe Zaobao newspaper reported Saturday. The Cedar Girls Secondary School has asked its students not to wear some locally popular brands and watches worth over S\$40 (\$28) to school, the report said. As a result, the newspaper said, students have started wearing counterfeit brand watches which cost less than S\$40.

Castro tells 'new rich' to pay taxes

HAVANA (R) — Cuban President Fidel Castro told citizens Friday that the country's "new rich" — self-employed people whose incomes are sometimes far more than wage earners — must be made to pay taxes. Castro said that failure to pay taxes was one example of "social indiscipline" that jeopardised Cuba's struggle to preserve its Socialist system. He said allies of the United States in its bid to overthrow the Cuban revolution were "social parasites" and "people with no social discipline." Speaking at an event to mark the 35th anniversary of the founding of the country's Union of Young Communists (UJC), the youth wing of the ruling Communist Party, Castro also criticised an illegal but common practice of people renting rooms or houses to foreign tourists.

Ex-generals charged in journalist's murder

SANTO DOMINGO (AFP) — The government Friday formally charged three retired generals with the 1975 murder of Dominican journalist Orlando Martinez. The three former generals are Salvador Lluberes Montas, Joaquin Pou Castro and Isidoro Martinez Gonzalez. A judge ordered them held without bail. Prosecutor Guillermo Moreno said two civilians admitted shooting Martinez and that Castro admitted driving the car from which the shots were fired. He also said the two civilians said the murder was carried out as "payback" for Martinez's constant criticism of former President Joaquin Balaguer.

Farrakhan sponsors tour by rival rap groups

CHICAGO (AFP) — Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has won a peace pledge from rival rappers from the East and West Coasts who have agreed to launch a joint peace tour and produce an album, a spokesman for the black separatist group here said Friday. Richard Muhammad told AFP that the accord was hammered out at a one-day hip hop summit at Farrakhan's Salaam Restaurant here between the feuding rappers. "They have agreed to end the feud they have been involved in and to embark on a nationwide peace tour," he said. Some 50 rappers attending the gathering, including West Coast star rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg and for the East Coast, Doug Fresh, Willie D. of the Ghetto Boys. The participants said they would produce an album dedicated to Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G., two prominent rap stars who were gunned down in still unsolved shootings.

Teacher sacked for taping pupils' mouths

ROME (R) — An Italian nursery school teacher got the sack after putting adhesive tape over the mouths of two of her four-year-old pupils. Mirco Bolis, governor of the school in Grignano Di Zocco, northern Italy, said he found out after another child "told his mother to do what teacher does to shut up his little brother." The teacher, Emanuela Milan, denied using unorthodox discipline. "I did it...for just a minute to show the children what silence is," she told La Stampa newspaper. "They understood it was just a game." Milan, 33, has taken her case to a labour tribunal.

Bull escapes in Mexico City, injures five

MEXICO CITY (R) — An escaped bull went on a rampage in the southern part of Mexico City Friday, injuring five people, television news reports said. The bull fell out of a truck, and ran through the streets of an area known as Tlalpan before being shot dead by police, said television programme. Hechos. "I was outside. We were all running, trying to hide in our houses," local resident Reina Martinez told the television broadcast.

Tanker explodes, causes oil spill

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines (AFP) — A tanker loaded with fuel products exploded and sank off this southern Philippine city Saturday, killing one person, seriously injuring six others and spewing thousands of gallons of oil into the sea, officials said. The 45-metre tanker MI Petron exploded early Saturday after a leak in the tanker's engine spread to the fuel drums and cylinders it was carrying, said bureau of fire protection officials, quoting chief mechanic Danny Dilangan, who suffered third-degree burns. Witnesses said the tanker's explosion was so powerful it shook the entire city. The Philippine Navy, the coast guard and firefighters worked Saturday to contain the oil spill, which measured about 1.6-kilometre.



SHUTTLE LAUNCHED: The space shuttle Columbia lifts off from launching pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Centre Friday as an egret sits in a dead tree. The crew of seven astronauts is expected to spend 16 days in space on a research mission (Reuters photo)

Zairean talks open, ceasefire expected — senior diplomats

PRETORIA (AFP) — Peace talks between Zaire's warring parties officially opened here Saturday, with senior diplomats suggesting the two sides were poised to agree on a ceasefire.

The talks are being co-chaired by U.N. envoy Mohamed Sahnoun, who also represents the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), along with South African Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad.

In a ceremony at South Africa's State Union buildings, Sahnoun termed the talks "historic" and said the participants were "duly mandated" to negotiate a lasting solution to the six-month civil war in the vast Central African country.

The envoys would discuss "putting into effect the peace plan adopted by the OAU and U.N. Security Council," Sahnoun said.

The U.N. plan, adopted in February, calls primarily for an immediate "cessation of hostilities" in addition to four other peace measures.

During the ceremony, at a crowded round table in a small room of the Union buildings where President Nelson Mandela has offices, envoys of embattled Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko and rebel leader Laurent Desire Kabila shook hands and made calls for peace.

South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, who has played a key role in organising the talks, expressed confidence in a peaceful resolution to the Zaire conflict, which began last October.

The civil war has not only torn the country apart, but also triggered a humanitarian crisis, displacing hundreds of thousands of people in Africa's volatile Great Lakes region.

Zairean rebel envoy Bizimana Karaha promised "we will not disappoint our people," adding that his delegation was hoping for a "peaceful and lasting solution" to the civil war.

"I'm very happy that my brothers (from the government delegation) are here and that we will be able to work for our country," Karaha said during a statement in French and English.

His counterpart, Zairean government Foreign Minister Kamanda Wa Kamanda, meanwhile, said his delegation came to the table "with an open mind, in search of peace."

The Zairean minister, who spoke in French, asked that the "international borders" of Zaire be respected, adding that the government would not allow "international interests to retard progress on the (African) continent."

Senior diplomats privately told AFP that a ceasefire "should be" an inevitable outcome of the talks, which were to continue following the opening ceremony at a secret location.

"We will make sure that there will be no stone unturned, and prepare the ground for a durable peace and reasonable transition," Sahnoun said during the ceremony.

"The ardent wish of the U.N. and OAU is that today the protagonists of the Zairean crisis understand the historical importance of this meeting," Sahnoun added.

In a single note of caution, however, he added that observers "should have no illusions that such meetings are able to produce spectacular results."

Both the Zairean rebel and government envoys praised South Africa for hosting the talks, and for setting an example of how to achieve national reconciliation after years of apartheid rule.

"We (Zaireans) can make it and we are capable of making it," Karaha said. "South Africa is a good example for U.S."

He added that while only the Zairean parties "can find a solution, any help is welcome. Even pressure can help."

Mbeki reminded the participants of what South Africa had to go through to achieve peace.

"We are confident that your (Zairean) delegations will rise to this historical challenge," Mbeki said, adding that the U.N.-OAU peace plan was a firm blueprint for Zaire.

"We consider ourselves as facilitators, a solution cannot be imposed from outside," Mbeki said.

South African officials promised to keep the media "informed" of developments in the negotiations, which were expected to continue for several days.

A complete list of the Zairean delegates, some of whom will arrive later in the talks, is expected to be issued later, South African officials said.

Representatives of Zaire's new prime minister, Etienne Tshisekedi, were due to attend the meetings, but had not yet arrived, senior officials said.

Kabila's rebel forces meanwhile continued their surge through eastern and southern Zaire and were closing in on the second largest city, Lubumbashi, and the fourth largest, Mbuji-Mayi. The second largest, Kisangani, was captured last month.

Witness reports Friday suggested that Kabila's troops had already taken Mbuji-Mayi, key to an important diamond mining district, but this was denied Saturday by Kabila at the rebel headquarters in Goma.

India's rulers, Congress in talks to end crisis

NEW DELHI (R) — India's ruling coalition and the rebellious Congress Party have begun high-level negotiations to break the political impasse threatening Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's government, politicians said on Saturday.

Jyoti Basu, chief minister of West Bengal State and leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), met Congress Party chief Sitaram Kesri late on Friday to explore ways to resolve the week-long crisis.

It was Kesri's first meeting with a senior leader of Deve Gowda's "United Front" Coalition since the Congress chief made the shock announcement on March 30 that his party was ending its support for the 15-party centre-left ruling alliance.

"Negotiations are on now," Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil told Reuters. "It's a positive sign. Both sides are making some effort."

CPI-M General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet was quoted as saying Friday's meeting was "fruitful."

Deve Gowda faces a vote of confidence in the lower house of parliament on April 11, giving the two rival camps less than a week to strike a possible deal averting snap elections that neither side wants.

The political crisis is holding hostage the investor-friendly budget for the 1997/98 (April-March) fiscal year that parliament has yet to approve.

In the past week, stock

India, Pakistan to hold talks on April 9

NEW DELHI (R) — Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan said on Saturday he would hold talks with his Indian counterpart on April 9 and hoped they could eventually resolve outstanding bilateral issues including Kashmir.

"We would like to resolve our disputes, and the core issue is naturally Kashmir," Khan told reporters after arriving in the Indian capital to attend a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Khan said he and Indian counterpart Inder Kumar Gujral would meet over breakfast next Wednesday to "carry forward" discussions held last month between the two countries' foreign secretaries.

"This will be our contact and it's to further progress on what our foreign secretaries of both sides discussed here in New Delhi for four days," Khan said.

Khan said he believed that there would be progress in Indo-Pakistani relations, and that the foreign secretaries would meet again in Islamabad to be followed by a meeting of the two nations' prime ministers during a regional summit in May.

"We hope to continue the process of normalisation and to try and solve the problems we have and the disputes that we have," the visiting foreign minister said.

prices have fluctuated wildly as hopes that the budget would survive the political turmoil have ebbed and flowed.

Opinion polls show that the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the largest single group in the 542-member parliament with 162 deputies, would gain the most if mid-term elections were held now.

BJP spokeswoman Sushma Swaraj said: "There are efforts to forge another coalition. But that will not last long. You can

all coalitions, the largest single party leads the coalition. We are the largest," the Congress spokesman said.

But newspapers said left-wing parties in the United Front were pushing a compromise that would create a coordination committee linking the ruling coalition and Congress.

Congress has complained that Deve Gowda has ignored its views, which could be aired through such a panel.

In exchange, the United Front would consider Congress's demand that Deve Gowda be replaced by another coalition leader. However, the prime minister, who has refused to step down, would stay in power for the time being, newspapers said.

Deve Gowda has asked the law ministry to determine whether the government can force the president to dissolve the lower house, a senior government official said. There is constitutional ambiguity over whether President Shankar Dayal Sharma would be bound by the prime minister's recommendation or could ask another political leader to try to cobble together a majority in hung parliament.

Politicians said Deve Gowda's leverage over Congress, which would stand to lose the most in snap polls, would be increased if it was clear the prime minister could force the president to dissolve parliament, triggering mid-term elections.

only defer the polls."

Deve Gowda's United Front Alliance linking regional, centrist and leftist parties controls 180 votes in the lower house, while Congress is the second biggest group with 140.

Gadgil said Congress continued to demand that it lead a new government coalition. The party of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had supported Deve Gowda since he assumed power last June, but not joined the council of ministers.

"We are of the view that in

EU's Brittan tells Brazil: Don't call it cognac

BRASILIA (R) — Having already sparred with Chile over whisky, European Union trade commissioner Sir Leon Brittan Friday continued a Latin American tour by taking on Brazil over cognac.

Brittan told reporters in the capital Brasilia that Brussels strongly objected to spirits on sale in Brazilian supermarkets that called themselves "cognac."

"In Europe, cognac is a spirit produced in a part of France and you can't call something cognac that doesn't come from there," Brittan said. "Cognac is cognac. Products which are not cognac you can call whatever you like, but not cognac."

The EU's top trade negotiator was in Brazil to hold talks with government officials on a diverse range of trade issues, including controversial Brazilian car import rules and EU tariffs on Brazilian coffee exports.

On Thursday, he met with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Friday with Foreign Minister Luiz Felipe Lampreia.

Brittan said he had not "threatened" Brazil over the

cognac dispute but had made it clear the European Union expected Brasilia to do something about it.

In Chile this week, the European Commission vice president was more forthright, warning Santiago the EU might turn to the World Trade Organisation if a spot over whisky taxes was not resolved.

Chile imposed a 70 per cent tax on whisky in 1979, much to the chagrin of whisky producers but to the delight of distillers of Pisco, a popular Chilean brandy.

Brittan was more aggressive when it came to disagreements between Brussels and Brasilia over a car industry regime that allows car makers with Brazilian factories to import at half the usual tariff.

The measure has resulted in about \$20 billion in pledged investment by major international automobile manufacturers but has angered some trading partners, mainly the United States, Japan and the European Union. After Brazil introduced a low-tariff quota system for EU, South Korean and Japanese car makers, the anger died down.

Fire guts Catholic churches in tense Northern Ireland

BELFAST (R) — Fire destroyed one Roman Catholic church and badly damaged another Saturday in suspected arson attacks during Northern Ireland's tense "marching season" by pro-British Protestants.

The St. MacNislas Church at Randalstown, north of Belfast, was completely destroyed by a blaze which started in the early hours. St. Comgall's Church in the nearby town of Antrim was less severely damaged by a fire which started an hour later.

Firemen said it was too early to say how the fires started but arson was suspected. Churches have become frequent arson targets in the 28-year Northern Ireland conflict between pro-British Protestants and pro-Irish Catholics.

The blazes took place hours after Northern Ireland's most outspoken supporter of a British, Protestant, Northern Ireland, Ian Paisley, urged his supporters not to negotiate away the rights of Protestants to parade through Catholic areas. "We will walk the roads of Ulster (Northern Ireland). We will march to our places of worship. We will not surrender an inch to Dublin or to popery," he told a rally of about 1,500 Protestants in the southern town of Portadown.

Paisley served notice to whoever wins Britain's May 1 general elections that hardline Protestants were in no mood to negotiate with minority Catholics on parades which last year lit the fuse of the worst civil unrest in the province for decades.

Paisley rejected appeals by church leaders, police and government officials that Protestant orders negotiate alternative routes to avoid offending Catholics during this year's marching season, which began peacefully last Monday.

By addressing the rally Paisley, head of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), became the most senior person of the Northern Ireland Protestant political establishment to throw his weight behind moves to refuse to negotiate disputed marches. Paisley ridiculed Roman Catholicism and Sinn Fein, political wing of IRA guerrillas whose band he saw in residents' groups in Portadown and elsewhere trying to deny Protestants a right to march which they trace back for centuries.

"Things are getting pretty strange if people who have walked for 180 years are told: You cannot march until you get agreement with a bunch of IRA murderers," he said.

Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams said Paisley's speech was a "calculated act of intimidation" and a "slap in the teeth" for Catholic Irish Nationalists in Portadown by Protestant Unionists, who want Northern Ireland to stay British. "It is evidence of a determination by some sections of unionism to ignore the rights and consent of nationalists who have expressed their opposition to triumphalist marches going through their areas," he said in a statement.

Paisley was speaking less than two kilometres from Drumree, Church where thousands of Protestants confronted a massive police cordon last July to protest against a ban on their parade through the Catholic Garvaghy Road area.

N. Korea seen ready to reply to peace offer

SEOUL (R) — One year after U.S. President Bill Clinton and his South Korean counterpart Kim Young-Sam proposed peace talks with North Korea, Pyongyang has finally agreed to give a response, South Korean state radio reported on Saturday.

The Korea Broadcasting System said North Korea had suggested a meeting this month to give its final answer.

It said South Korean authorities had given a "favourable response" to the suggestion.

The offer was made in a meeting of officials from the two Koreas and the United States in New York on Friday.

There was no indication whether Pyongyang would give a positive response, reject the offer or set further conditions for participation. Mr. Kim and Mr. Clinton unveiled their proposal for peace talks, also including China, last April 16. The talks are aimed at establishing a permanent peace to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean war. Seoul officials were not immediately available for comment.

North Korea is keeping the

world guessing on whether it is finally prepared to discuss burying cold war enmities at a time when it is precariously balanced on the edge of famine.

It desperately needs international aid to stave off a human catastrophe and has been seeking to use its participation in the four-way talks as leverage to extract food assistance.

In its first formal reaction to the peace initiative, Pyongyang last month demanded substantial food aid as a condition for taking part in any talks.

Seoul and Washington rejected preconditions but said food aid could be discussed as part of the four-way talks.

South Korea pledged \$6 million and the United States \$10 million to a \$41 million World Food Programme (WFP) appeal in aid for impoverished North Korea.

The WFP on Friday more than doubled the appeal to \$95 million to feed babies and toddlers aged under six in the Stalinist state. Seoul and Washington have not announced whether they will boost their contribution.

U.S. to do nuke tests without explosions in June

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States will hold its first non-explosive nuclear test in June, with a second one expected in the fall, the energy department said Friday.

The new round of underground tests are designed to ensure the reliability of the U.S. nuclear stockpile without breaking an international ban on nuclear bomb tests.

"Subcritical experiments are essential to our commitments to a world free of nuclear testing and a reliable nuclear deterrent and are fully consistent with the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty)," Energy Secretary Federico Pena said.

The subcritical tests involve nuclear materials such as plutonium but do not trigger a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction that would cause an explosion.

The expected announcement inspired a string of protests this week by anti-nuclear activists, who blocked routes to the Nevada test site and barricaded gates to the site.

Anti-nuclear groups believe the experiments violate the spirit of the test ban treaty and send a bad signal to other countries that are tempted to build nuclear weapons.

"The U.S. has the opportunity to drive the nuclear disarmament process forward, but it could also inadvertently drive the world right back into a nuclear arms race," said Bruce Hall, a disarmament campaigner for Greenpeace.

An arms control expert said that while the tests were allowed under the international test ban, they should be conducted above ground instead of underground so that outsiders could check whether the tests were legitimate.

There's no verification mechanism to say you're actually doing what you say you're doing," said Kevin O'Neill, deputy director of the Institute for Science and International Security. "To everybody else it may look like a nuclear test."

aboveground tests would be more costly because the government would have to build new facilities for containing plutonium, he said.

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Kohl's plan to run again puts pressure on opposition

BONN (R) — Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) came under growing pressure Saturday to name their own candidate for chancellor after Helmut Kohl caught the opposition party off-guard by announcing plans to run for a fifth term.

With opinion polls showing an expanding majority of voters want lower Saxony state Premier Gerhard Schroeder to lead the SPD against Mr. Kohl in next year's elections, union leaders and some SPD officials called on the party to act quickly.

SPD party leaders want to wait until April 1998 to nominate their challenger to the Conservative Kohl, who has defeated the left-leaning SPD in four successive polls since 1982.

Although Mr. Kohl and his Christian Democrats (CDU) have slumped in

surveys because of a stagnating economy and record 12.2 per cent unemployment, the chancellor appeared to play a masterful stroke this week by announcing he will seek a fifth term.

The move knocked the SPD off balance and revived a contentious issue in the party that had recently seemed unusually united against Kohl and his centre-right coalition.

"It will not be any easier for a SPD candidate if he is asked to win a race against Kohl at the last minute," said Roland Isen, head of the Dag White-Collar Union. "The SPD must put up an alternative to Kohl now, not some time in the future."

The next general elections are due in late 1998.

SPD Chairman Oskar Lafontaine,

whom Mr. Kohl crushed in the 1990 election, has not yet commented on Mr. Kohl's move. Press reports say Mr. Lafontaine would like to run against Mr. Kohl again, but opinion polls regularly show him trailing the chancellor.

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Gerd Andres, an SPD member of parliament and spokesman for the party's "Seehelm Circle" which is close to labour unions, urged the SPD leaders to change their stance and nominate the party's candidate by December at the latest.

"The SPD will not be able to withstand another full year a debate over who will be its chancellor candidate," Andres said. "The man with the best chances has to be nominated and that is clearly Gerhard Schroeder."

Karin Junker, head of the SPD's women working group, said that the party needed to put its "battle strategy" in place now.

The chancellor candidate issue has to be discussed at the next SPD board meeting," she told the Bild on Sonntag newspaper. "A quick

nomination would have the advantage that the SPD can then line up a clear battle strategy."

Mr. Schroeder, while admitting he was delighted with opinion poll results showing him ahead of Mr. Kohl, said he wanted to stay with the earlier-agreed schedule and wait until next April.

He denied, however, in an interview Saturday with WDR Radio that the election due in March 1998 in his state of Lower Saxony was the reason behind that strategy of waiting.

"No, that is not the main reason," Mr. Schroeder said. "But naturally it is sensible if a person is success-oriented to first wait to see if he or she achieve the standards required."

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Fighting on all fronts

THE FOUNDING in Amman on Saturday of "The Jerusalem Fund for Joint Investment Company (JFJIC)" by Palestinian and Jordanian businessmen was a much needed step to counter Israel's policy of Judaizing Arab East Jerusalem by consolidating the Jewish presence in the occupied Holy City.

The move, taken by some of the most noted names in Jordanian, Palestinian and regional financial circles, is of course only the first step in a very long way, given the billions of dollars that Zionist and pro-Zionist businessmen have been investing in expanding and building Jewish settlements that dot the Palestinian territories as a stark reminder of occupation.

However, the very fact that the initiative was indeed taken and all indications that it would be followed up with vigour are a reflection of the Arab and Muslim concern over Israel's stepped-up moves to tighten its grip on Arab East Jerusalem and obliterate the Holy City's Muslim and Arab character ahead of swallowing it altogether.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, emphasised in his message to the founding meeting of the fund, supporting the Arab presence in East Jerusalem and building infrastructure there to meet the housing needs of Palestinians is a very effective means to highlight the Arab and Muslim solidarity with the Palestinians in their ongoing battle for the Holy City.

"Jerusalem needs our compassion," said the Crown Prince in his message. "But it is our solidarity, knowledge and accurate assessments of the needs of Jerusalem that can help us articulate effective measures to protect the city and its Arab Muslim identity."

The fund has drawn up a multi-pronged approach that includes not only building housing for Palestinians but also investing in projects in other sectors that would create jobs for Palestinians and cement their relations with their land and territory.

Saturday's meeting raised about \$35 million of the \$100 million capital of the fund, and we have no doubt that any public invitation to raise the rest of the equity would be met with a resounding response. While the commercial viability of the fund has been established beyond doubt, the initiative is also a very strong political message to Israel. By the same token, we should also be prepared to fight the major hurdles that Israel is sure to pose to prevent the fund from translating its plans to projects on the ground.

As such, the fund needs strong political support from all of us as well as the Arab and Muslim nations at large. We can discern from the firm positions adopted by the Arab Gulf states against Israel's dedicated move to usurp Arab East Jerusalem and along with it the Arab and Muslim rights in the Holy City that such strong support would be forthcoming.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i Saturday discussed Europe's role in the Middle East, noting that European countries, which played a major role during the colonial era in this region, now look impotent vis-a-vis the region despite the strong links with its countries and its major interests in this part of the world. Mahmoud Rimawi said Europe, which contributed to the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine, is failing to support justice and assist the Palestinians to regain their legitimate rights. It is true that timid European voices are raised now and then and that the European Union has appointed a special envoy for the Middle East, but the Europeans seem to be unable to stop the Israeli repression of Palestinians because America is standing in the way, noted the writer. He said it seems that Europe is failing here as it has failed in settling the Bosnian problem, having left the field to the Americans. What is more appalling now is to see Washington totally excluding Moscow from any role and leaning more and more towards supporting the injustice and the repression exercised against the Palestinians. The writer expressed regret to see Europe, which has a great deal of interest in the Arab region, content with watching the events and satisfied only with offering financial assistance, without involving itself in a meaningful effort that would bring justice to our region.

A WRITER for Al Dustur described the bloated public administration as a charitable society, or a safe haven, for the unemployed and those unwilling to get involved in the private sector. Fakhri Kawar criticised ministers who, he said, continue to appoint relatives and friends in government offices despite knowing that they are aggravating the situation. They resort to such practices, he said, to ease the pressure exercised on them by their tribes or clans that keep demanding them to help their sons find jobs. The writer quoted an unnamed minister who once told him that his ministry is overloaded with at least 3,000 extra employees who do no work at all but that he can by no means lay them off because each and every one of them belongs to a tribe or a clan that could raise much trouble for him if he resorted to such a measure. He added that laying off this great number of people from one ministry could destabilise the country's security. Noting that the previous governments had tried their hand at reforming the public administration system, the writer expressed hope that the newly appointed Reforms Committee will not be influenced by any source in trimming down the bloated administration and ending corruption and abuse of authority in all government offices.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Merging has benefits, yet 'Jordanian banks are not expected to merge voluntarily'

By Dr. Fahed Faneh

DURING THE past four decades, Jordan succeeded to a large extent to develop and modernise its social and economic sectors. The development of the banking sector, in particular, witnessed the fastest growth. Banking became the most prominent and influential sector leading the economy, especially since 1964 when a Central Bank was established and started carrying out all the functions and responsibilities usually undertaken by the central banks in advanced countries.

The present banking system in Jordan is diverse. It covers a wide range of functions. Topping the system is a vibrant and effective Central Bank which is not only leading the banking system, but also taking part in formulating the overall economic policy of the country.

The number of licensed banks operating in Jordan by the end of 1995 was 21, of which nine were national commercial banks, including the Housing Bank, five were branches of foreign banks, in addition to an Islamic Bank, and six were investment banks. The number of operating branches in the Kingdom stands now at 430, an average of one branch for each ten thousand people. A bank specialising in financing exports was also licensed and commenced operations during 1996.

Jordanian national banks have 97 branches operating abroad, of which 39 are in the Palestinian self-rule territories.

There are seven specialised credit institutions, of which three are solely owned by the public sector and deal with financing of agriculture, housing and municipalities. They are the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC), the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), and the Cities and Villages Bank (CVB). Other three represent mixed ownership and deal with financing housing, cooperative societies, industry and tourism. They are the Housing Bank (HB), Jordan's Cooperative Organisation (JCO), and the Industrial Development Bank (IDB). The new Export Financing Bank (EFB) is solely owned by the private sector.

The banking system is only one component of a relatively developed financial sector which includes over 25 insurance companies, an active stock exchange, a Social Security Corporation, a loan and export guarantee corporation, and, very soon, a deposit guarantee corporation and a real estate mortgage refinancing corporation.

Merger of banks was always an idea in the minds of policy makers. The irony is that the Central Bank of Jordan thinks that Jordan is overbanked, although it was the

Central Bank who unnecessarily issued too many licences to start new banks, mostly owned by non-Jordanians, especially during the second half of the seventies, including: the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (1975), the Jordan Kuwait Bank (1977), the Jordan Gulf Bank (1978), the Petra Bank (1978), the Arab Jordan Investment Bank (1978), the Jordan Islamic Bank (1979), the Syrian-Jordanian Bank (1980).

Besides, there are 11 non-banking financial and savings companies, 10 of which were licensed between 1979 and 1984. They are: the Arab Finance Corporation (Jordan) (1979), the Jordan Securities Corporation (1980), the National Financial Investment Company (1981), the Jordan Finance House (1981), the Islamic Investment House (1981), the Finance and Credit Corporation (1982), the Jordan Investment and Finance Corporation (1982), DARCO (1982), the National Development and Finance Company, the Beit Al Mal Saving and Investment for Housing Company (Beituna) (1984).

Many of the above entities disappeared later on, due to merger, acquisition and liquidation.

The Central Bank, which unofficially closed the door for new banks starting with the early eighties, opened the window for new banks by authorising financial companies, which sooner or later were converted to investment banks and sometimes to commercial banks, to run. This, in turn, raised the question of overbanking and the desirability of mergers.

Advantages of mergers are abundant in the specialised literature, especially on the large scale of optimum-size economies, expansion, limiting fierce competition, gaining respectability in the international banking market and avoiding failure and liquidation.

The Central Bank of Jordan, which at times went out of its way to license or upgrade finance companies to investment banks or even full-fledged commercial banks also went out of its way at other times to give incentives to encourage banks to merge. Among these incentives were:

— Granting full income tax exemption for two years (No more available).

— Granting an investment bank licence to financial companies which agree to merge.

— Granting a commercial bank licence to investment banks which agree to merge.

— Allowing merging banks to operate as investment banks and commercial banks simultaneously, i.e., to become comprehensive banks.

— Receiving a deposit from the Central Bank for a number of years at reduced interest rate, especially when the Central Bank was already involved in supplying liquidity to the bank in trouble to avoid failure.

These measures failed to produce an immediate response. Only two financial companies merged, enjoyed the tax exemption, and later claimed an investment bank licence.

Recently, the Central Bank came up with a new package of incentives for banks to merge, including exemption from cash reserve requirement. However, no response seems to be forthcoming. The merger of the Jordan National Bank and the Business Bank took place. It is doubtful whether this lonely merger came about as a result of incentives. In fact, members of one family are the major shareholders of both banks. It seems that the family wanted to consolidate its ownership and control, while taking advantage of the incentives was secondary.

Besides this merger of two healthy banks, almost all other mergers were due to financial difficulties, or as a way to dispose of an ailing entity. Under this category fall the mergers which resulted in the Middle East Bank, and the Philadelphia Bank.

It was due to financial difficulties that certain banks disappeared through mergers, such as the Syrian-Jordanian Bank, Bank Al Mashrek, Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), Jordan Securities Corporation, Jordan Finance House, Islamic Investment House, REFCO and DARCO.

One can conclude that bank mergers in Jordan did not take place as a result of incentives granted by the authorities. Incentives were merely utilised as a bonus. Mergers in Jordan never took place due to economic advantages mentioned in the literature, including economies of scale. They almost always took place under the pressure of financial difficulties and to avoid liquidation.

Even when a merger makes sense economically, it is very difficult to go through the lengthy process relating to legal procedures. It is even more difficult to reconcile the conflicting personal interests of the parties concerned, whether at the level of top management or at the level of the board of directors.

No one doubts the benefits of bank mergers to create stronger and bigger banks, yet no one expects Jordanian banks to merge voluntarily, no matter how generous the incentives were.

Middle Eastern integration should be gradual

By Dr. Maher A. Waked

THE TERM "Middle East" was invented and adopted since the early years of this century and was used by the militants and strategic planners of the Western countries. From that time on, the term entered the international political and economy dictionary; later, the idea of an economic and secure Middle Eastern region was born and survived until the end of the cold war. With the beginning of the implementation of peace agreements between Israel and some Arab countries, the notion came to the fore and new ideas emerged, like Middle Eastern regional cooperation grouping some countries of the region, including Turkey and Israel.

However, strategic thinkers differ over the issue and definition of the Middle East region. Some define it like the area between Pakistan and the end of Egypt's Western Sahara, and between Turkey and Ethiopia, passing by the Arabic Peninsula; others assign to it stretches of land from Egypt to Iraq and from Syria to Yemen, thus making it an area inhabited by more than 130 million people.

With this context, there appeared two schools of thought: one calls for an integrated Middle East that could assure economic prosperity and security for the entire region; the other rejects integration as a Zionist, imperialist plot meant to control the acquisition of Arab fortunes. For the latter, allowing Israel to become part of the Arab World means granting Israel hegemony over the area, especially economic, with its products flooding the regional market.

Integration within the context of a just and lasting peace in the area is possible. It can happen if good-will prevails. If we take Turkey as an example, the country needs to import energy and ore, but it also needs to export its products and services to the markets of the region, in spite of its ties with the newly created independent Asian countries, which, in some cases, may happen by virtue of a common language and heritage. Turkey can also, if feasible, supply piped water, needed by the area. Common welfare

requires creating and sustaining communications links and power grid linkage within it.

As far as Israel is concerned, it looks at integration from two perspectives. The first, allegedly, is related to security. Israel maintains it is important to contain fundamentalism and hostile movements and that a powerful, deterrent force should always be maintained. The second, which could be considered as more important, is related to economy: Israel hopes to obtain cheap labour while maintaining the benefits of its technological achievements to open the markets of the region for its products and use the region's countries as a gateway to other Arab and markets or beyond.

This would enable it to attract tangible investments to support its heavy industry. It is worth mentioning here that the Arab industrial and agricultural commodities could compete with their Israeli counterparts if, and only if, their quality improved to reach international standards. The influx of capital to the private sector, in this case, should increase and

modern technology transfer is a must.

European countries should have a great role to play in promoting economic development and helping raise the standard of living in the region.

A matter of concern here is the economic gap which is still very wide between the economies in the area, especially between the Arab countries and Israel. The Israeli gross national product (GNP) is about \$70 billion, which equals the total of the GNP of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt together. Accordingly, Israel's per capita rate of \$14,000, is tenfold higher than that of the region's countries.

Therefore, rising the per capita income in the Arab countries is of paramount importance to maintain the stability factors in the area.

I believe that Middle Eastern integration should be gradual, based on strengthening the common interests of the peoples and governments in the region. Encouraging commercial and tourism activities and accelerating the economic development seems like the right place to start from.

'More suicidal cultists believed to take their lives at the end of the 2nd Christian millennium'

By G. H. Jansen

IS IT valid to inquire why the suicidal cultists, who have made their presence felt in the West over the past few years, are almost invariably and exclusively, Christian and dissident Protestant?

There are few, if any cults, in Catholicism or Greek Orthodoxy or the mainstream Protestant churches, like the Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists or Anglicans. The cultists are heterodox, their leaders generally lapsed or dissident Protestants.

And it is the extremists amongst the heterodox cults, like those of the Solar Temple in Canada and Switzerland, Jim Jones in Guyana, the Branch Davidians of Waco or Heaven's Gate of Rancho Santa Fé which can be, and are, suicidal. Furthermore, members of the Swiss, Guyana and Waco groupings killed other cult followers during mass suicides, committing multiple murder before killing themselves. Branch Davidians were also prepared to kill in self-defence when challenged by the American authorities.

There are cult groups in other faiths — the Sufis in Islam or followers of Zen in Buddhism or groupings around gurus in Hinduism — but they are not suicidal nor murderous like the followers of the Japanese guru who released poison gas on the Tokyo underground.

The three U.S. suicidal cults had several common characteristics. Jim Jones, Marshall Applewhite and David Koresh all claimed to be reincarnations of Jesus Christ and promised their cult members eternal life if they committed suicide alongside their messiahs. All three cults began and flourished in the kooky climate of southern California,

although their leaders did not originate or their members did not necessarily hail from there. Jim Jones led his followers from California to their deaths in the jungle of Guyana. David Koresh from Los Angeles to the desert compound outside Waco, Texas, and Marshall Applewhite from Arizona to a mansion at Rancho Santa Fé.

So there was a migration before mass suicide and obliteration. All three leaders practised some sort of sexual abuse. Jones and Koresh lay with their female followers, including underage girls, while Applewhite castrated himself and several of his company. The leaders, like those of so far non-suicidal cults, took control of the assets of their followers and presided over communes where families disintegrated and individualism was subsumed.

The theologies and practices of the three cults were very far from mainstream Christianity. The three messiahs fixated on specific things: Jones on making a new beginning in the wilderness, Koresh on amassing an armoury and Applewhite on computers and space travel.

The single European-Canadian suicidal cult shared many of the characteristics of the three U.S. death-wish cults: a messiah, a Frenchman this time, and a following with Christian origins, communal living and renunciation of normal familial relationships; but the Solar Temple's strange beliefs verged on the pagan.

Psychologists and parapsychologists tuned into the full spectrum of cults, suicidal and otherwise, believe that the end of the second Christian millennium will produce further mass suicides amongst cultists as did the end of the first, 1,000 years ago.

LETTERS

No change of job

To the Editor:

IN HER weekly column Society on the Move (Jordan Times, April 3-4, 1997) Jennifer Hamameh quoted from a news item published by the new weekly "Al Mithaq", saying that I, "along with 24 other journalists," plan to run for a parliamentary seat in Karak in the upcoming general elections. Allow me to say that that piece of information, as far as I am concerned at least, is groundless. While standing for elections is an honour for any Jordanian citizen contemplating it, the truth is that it is a greater honour and pride for me to be working for His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

Abdul Salam Tarawneh,
Press Adviser to HRH Crown Prince Hassan,
Amman.

What's in a number?

To the Editor:

OUR BUSINESS has a branch in Wasfi Tal Street. A while back, we were informed that the telephone number would be changed by adding a seventh digit, in keeping with the modernisation of the Abdali switchboard. Many friends strongly suggested that we go see the people involved to ensure that the new number is a "nice" one. We did not. We had six business lines and four private lines. We never approached anyone to obtain a tailored number and we were not about to change that now. After all, what's in a number?

As it turns out, there is a lot. Our number was 693aab. The ad in the newspaper, informing people of the changes, stated that the first two digits would be replaced by 551, 552, 553 except in "rare" cases. We had been told earlier that the building we are situated in would have the 553 addition, so our number, we expected, would have become 553aab. As it turned out, we were one of these rare cases that the rule did not apply to. Why? Because our new number was too "nice" to hand out to normal subscribers. The people at the Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) branded us as a rare case and gave the number to another establishment, with more clout. How much more clout? A lot.

We ended up with 553aab. Not a bad number is itself, except that it would be impossible for anyone to break the code and figure it out.

Still filled with rage, I want to reflect on the whole episode. Several questions force themselves:

1. Does the company with clout pay extra for this preferred status? Do we pay less? Does their prosperity rely on getting this number? Does ours matter?

2. Who is responsible for making decisions of this kind? And does this person or group of persons appreciate the rights of citizens?

3. This is a business number that is frequently used by customers. We may lose business because the change inflicted on it does not adhere to the advertised rule. Who is responsible for these losses and are the people at the JTC willing to compensate us?

It is depressing to know that things like this still happen in this age of democracy that we live in. I am asking JTC to give a technically convincing reason why the rules had to be changed when it came to our number. The amount of clout held by the company that was given the number should not be relevant. If no good reason exists, I am truly sorry.

Issam Rihani,
Jiries Rihani & Sons Co.,
Amman.

Quiet deportation — Israeli residency policy in East Jerusalem

From B'Tselem

ISRAELI RESIDENCY policies have caused the displacement of thousands of Palestinian families from East Jerusalem and threaten thousands more.

The forced eviction of Palestinians from East Jerusalem is clearly in breach of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Beyond this, however, is the acute human suffering of people who have moved out of East Jerusalem — temporarily, they thought — for a variety of reasons (the following are just some examples):

— Study or work abroad.

— The acute housing shortage for Palestinians in Jerusalem, a result of deliberate Israeli policies.

— The refusal by Israeli authorities to allow a "non-Jerusalemite" spouse to dwell in the city.

— Normal population movement from the heart of a city to its suburbs.

People belonging to any of these categories are at the risk of losing their right to "residency" in Jerusalem.

This means that they may not enter their hometown, let alone work in it, unless by special permit, and that they are no longer entitled to social benefits, such as national insurance, child benefits, pension and health insurance.

It should be stressed that these policies affect a Palestinian moving 50 yards north of the municipal boundaries, but not a Jewish Jerusalemite moving to West Bank settlements in the vicinity.

Such a person suffers no loss of freedom of movement, residency rights or social benefits.

What is frustrating to us as human rights activists is that these grossly unjust and inhumane policies, which have already affected thousands of Palestinians, and may affect tens of thousands more, are carried out discreetly, through invisible, bureaucratic procedures backed by Israeli laws and court decisions.

There are no trucks, no weeping women and children dragged by brutal soldiers, no physical violence — in other words, little for the media to "cover."

But the actual effect resembles what the most extremist political factions in Israel have advocated: large-scale displacement of Palestinians which threatens to permanently alter the demographic character of Jerusalem.

We believe that for these policies to be halted, public opinion and decision makers, both in Israel and internationally, must be made aware of them and the damage they cause.

The goal of Israeli residency policy in East Jerusalem is to reduce the number of Palestinians living in the city, and to create a demographic and geographic reality that will preempt any future effort to challenge Israeli sovereignty in East Jerusalem.

Some 170,000 Palestinians holding Israeli identity cards reside in East Jerusalem.

For the past two years, Israel's Interior Ministry has been revoking the

residency rights of Palestinians in East Jerusalem who at some stage of their lives lived outside the municipal borders.

Consequently, numerous Palestinians have been required to leave their houses and families and move to areas outside the Green Line, the demarcation line of Israel at the outset of the Arab-Israeli war.

It is estimated that some 120,000 Palestinians (70 per cent of the Palestinian population of the city) may lose their right to live in Jerusalem because of this new Israeli policy.

ans did not request citizenship.

Israel's Supreme Court held that the Entry into Israel Law applies in determining the status of Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem, and that the identity card issued to them is comparable to the permit to permanently reside in Israel granted under that law.

The court also held that when a permanent resident settles outside Israel, the permanent residency status expires. "Expiration" of the permit, contrary to revocation, leads to the loss of residency

seven years.

By applying the Entry into Israel Law to residents of East Jerusalem, Israel relates to them as immigrants, even though the families involved have lived in the area for scores of years, and it was Israel who entered the area, and not vice versa.

The legal status, described above, reflects only a small part of the picture. The Interior Ministry uses unwritten criteria and unclear procedures in revoking residency status. Human rights organisations and

Israeli policies designed to entrench Israeli sovereignty in East Jerusalem:

1. Israel has greatly restricted Palestinians in residential building, causing overcrowding due to the serious housing shortage.

2. Prior to 1994, Israel rejected requests for family unification submitted by Jerusalem Palestinian women on behalf of their spouses who are not Jerusalemites.

The Israeli policy compelled these women to leave the city in order to be with their husbands.

East Jerusalem Palestinians living outside the city borders customarily went to the Interior Ministry's office in Jerusalem to renew their exit permits, thereby restarting the seven-year counting period.

The Interior Ministry's policy had been that only a continuous seven-year stay outside of Jerusalem would result in the loss of the right of residency. In the past two years, however, Israel changed its policy retroactively, and those who have not lived within the Jerusalem Municipality continuously lose their right to live in the city, even if they lived outside the city for less than seven years and even if they did not become permanent residents or citizens of another country. Persons who require the services of the Interior Ministry in a variety of matters, such as replacing an identity card, registering a child, or receiving an identity card for the first time at age 16, are required to provide documentary proof that they live in Jerusalem.

Those unable to provide

suitable documentation lose their right to live in Jerusalem.

This requirement is excessive and unduly severe, and serves as an additional bureaucratic tool to reduce the number of Palestinians holding Israeli identity cards.

The requirement of proving residency in Jerusalem applies both to Palestinians living in the United States and to those living in Al Ram, which lies only a few kilometres from Jerusalem's municipal borders. Since the residency status "automatically expires," denial of residency status occurs without a hearing, without explanation, without any notice of the right to appeal, and without being informed that the policy had changed.

The authorities have also taken Jerusalem residency status from East Jerusalem Palestinians who moved to the Jerusalem suburbs (which are within the West Bank).

Loss of Jerusalem residency status has significant implications. Residents of East Jerusalem are not subject to the military government, as are residents of the rest of the occupied territories. Those without Jerusalem residency status are not allowed to enter freely and work in Israel, and require special permits.

Loss of residency also results in the immediate cessation of national insurance benefits and health insurance through Israeli sick funds, as well as access to education and other benefits.

The Israeli Supreme Court has approved the policies of the Interior

Ministry. Therefore, no domestic remedies are available to the victims of these policies.

Since the Interior Ministry does not publish its criteria for revoking residency status, East Jerusalem's Palestinians are uncertain about their status. Consequently, many do not utilise the services of the Interior Ministry, fearing that their residency in Jerusalem will be questioned and that they will be found not to be entitled to an Israeli identity card.

Within the next six months, the Interior Ministry intends to replace the identity cards of all Israeli citizens and residents. Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem will then have to go to the Interior Ministry, where the clerks will check whether they are entitled to an Israeli identity card.

According to estimates, some 70 per cent of Jerusalem's Palestinian residents are liable to lose their residency status.

This would have severe consequences in terms of this population's ability to enjoy civil rights as well as economic and social benefits. In addition, Israeli residency policies are liable to dramatically change the character of the city.

B'Tselem is an Israeli independent, non-governmental organisation established in 1989 to monitor human rights violations in the occupied territories. It publishes reports, conducts advocacy campaigns, engages in public education and serves as a resource centre.

"There are no trucks, no weeping women and children dragged by brutal soldiers, no physical violence — in other words, little for the media to 'cover.' But the actual effect resembles what the most extremist political factions in Israel have advocated: large-scale displacement of Palestinians which threatens to permanently alter the demographic character of Jerusalem."

Following the war, in contravention of international law, Israel annexed East Jerusalem, an area of 70 km² in East Jerusalem, and applied Israeli law in the annexed territory.

Immediately after the war, Israel conducted a census in East Jerusalem and granted the status of permanent resident to everyone present in East Jerusalem at the time of the census. Israel also declared that residents of East Jerusalem could receive Israeli citizenship upon request, but for political reasons, most East Jerusalem Palestini-

without explanation and without any procedure that would enable the subject to appeal.

The law stipulates that a person is considered to have settled outside Israel if he or she remained abroad for more than seven years, received a permit to permanently reside in another state, or became a citizen of that state.

The Supreme Court held that residency may also be revoked if other facts indicate that the individual settled outside of Israel even where the period of residency outside Israel was less than

attorneys have failed in their attempts to determine the applicable criteria and procedures.

The ministry refuses to publish its criteria for issuing or revoking residency permits, or data regarding the number of persons whose residency has been revoked.

Not only Palestinians who have moved abroad are threatened by this policy. Over the years, many Palestinians have moved to neighbourhoods and villages outside the Jerusalem municipality.

This migration is the result of the following

Palestinians serve ultimatum over peace and settlements

(Continued from page 1)

contain five basic points, including a stop to settlement construction, recognition of the principle of land-for-peace and affirmation that previous agreements must be carried out, said Arafat spokesman Marwan Kanafani.

The Palestinian cabinet said in a statement Saturday that the Clinton administration "must put real pressure on the government of Israel to stop the Judaisation of Jerusalem and to stop settlement building on Jabal Abu Ghneim immediately."

Washington must move decisively now to stop construction, "and the credibility of the United States hangs in the balance," the statement said.

"There will be a number of ideas that can be explored," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said. "I think the president's view is that we need at this point agreements on process that bring the parties together, that build confidence between them, and that lend themselves to the probability of success when it comes to resolving differences that exist between the parties."

Mr. McCurry sidestepped specifics, and State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the administration was going into a "cone of silence" before Mr. Netanyahu's meeting with Mr. Clinton.

Mr. Burns said at a news briefing on Friday: "We have our own ideas for how to move this situation forward... We're going to share those ideas first and foremost with the parties — with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat."

"We're very active," Mr. Burns said, "and as a result of the discussions with King Hussein, Secretary Albright's telephone discussions with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat, we are developing our own ideas and we're going to put them

forward."

Mr. Clinton has informed Mr. Arafat that the United States is willing to move forward with a new peace initiative, and that he would coordinate with the Palestinian leader before making it public, Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat told Voice of Palestine Radio Saturday.

U.S. officials signalled that both the issues of violence and settlements would be raised in the Clinton-Netanyahu meeting.

Mr. Netanyahu reportedly has told senior cabinet ministers that the new U.S. initiative would be based on his proposal to move up negotiations on a permanent peace agreement and try to wrap up talks in six to nine months.

During that time, the two sides would have to resolve the toughest disputes still facing them: the future of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, final borders, and Palestinian refugees. The final phase could take place in a Camp David-style setting, with Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat negotiating face-to-face.

Under the current timetable, the deadline for reaching a final peace agreement is May 1999.

The Palestinians have been sceptical, saying they feared this was an Israeli ploy to get out of commitments made in earlier peace agreements, including a three-stage troop pullback in the West Bank to be completed by mid-1998.

The Palestinians said Saturday Mr. Arafat would only agree to meet Mr. Netanyahu after Israel agrees to pull its bulldozers out of Jabal Abu Ghneim.

"Arafat will agree to meet Benjamin Netanyahu to save the peace process if Israel respects agreements already reached and stops work on the settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim," Arafat advisor Nabil Abu Rdaini said.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stepped up the pressure on Israel Thursday when she expressed her "concern" over settlement building to visiting Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

But Washington has twice blocked resolutions at the United Nations criticising the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement.

But Mr. Mordechai said Jews on the West Bank have as much a right as Jews in Tel Aviv or New York to build schools or otherwise improve their neighbourhoods.

Mr. Mordechai, speaking to B'nai B'rith, a Jewish service organisation, said Israel would not establish new settlements, as it promised in the Oslo accords.

Ms. Albright discussed the "thickening" of existing Jewish enclaves with Mr. Mordechai at the State Department.

She told reporters Friday she had expressed her concerns to him.

"It's very important to do everything we can to rebuild the bonds of confidence," she said.

King undergoes successful prostate surgery

(Continued from page 1)

On Monday, Mr. Netanyahu was to confer in Washington with Mr. Clinton to mull various proposals to restart Israeli-Palestinian talks that have been deadlocked since construction of a Jewish settlement began in East Jerusalem on March 18.

To break the deadlock, Mr. Netanyahu has proposed fast-track negotiations with the Palestinians to settle all outstanding issues in six to nine months

instead of the two-year timetable outlined in previous accords.

Press reports said the two leaders were considering convening a U.S.-sponsored Camp David-style summit similar to the 1995 Dayton, Ohio marathon talks that produced the Yugoslav peace accords.

The proposals also reportedly include a six-month Israeli freeze on Jewish settlements and a Palestinian pledge to clamp down on militants.

Postponement of Lebanese elections triggers storm

BEIRUT (AFP) — A political storm has erupted at the very top of Lebanon's pro-Syrian government over the prime minister's indefinite postponement of what would have been the country's first municipal elections in 34 years.

Parliament on Thursday approved Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's decision to withdraw a bill organising the polls, to the anger of President Elias Hrawi.

Agriculture Minister Shawkat Fakhr, a friend of Mr. Hrawi, accused the prime minister of "violating the constitution and parliament's internal workings."

"We are facing a serious situation. Hariri's position reflects only his own convictions and not government policy," Mr. Fakhr told a press conference Friday.

The government had announced in December that municipal elections would be held in June, but Mr.

Hariri feared they would destabilise the country.

As a result of the crisis, a cabinet meeting planned for Saturday was postponed and Mr. Hariri travelled to Syria, which pulls the political strings in Lebanon.

Interior Minister Michel Murr, who said Saturday he was trying to mediate between the president and prime minister to "defuse the tension," has also gone to Damascus.

Mr. Murr said the elections must go ahead as announced. "The government's credibility depends on it," he said.

Mr. Hariri justified the decision to postpone the elections by saying they could "overwhelm the country." He said deputies had pointed out numerous contradictions and loopholes in the proposed election law, especially in relation to villages deserted in the 1975-1990 civil war.

The bill proposed the elec-

tion of municipal councils in the southern Lebanon border zone occupied by Israel and nearby villages, without specifying what would happen in deserted villages there.

Another concern raised by politicians has been the effect of elections on already strong divisions between Lebanon's Christian and Muslim communities.

Former Prime Minister Salim Hoss asked whether Lebanon was "ready for such an experience at a time when communal and sectarian feeling is stronger than ever in a large section of the population."

Unlike the procedure for legislative elections in Lebanon, the municipal vote would not divide seats between Muslims and Christians and Mr. Hoss feared it would lead to minorities being excluded from representation in mixed towns and villages.

Jordanian-Palestinian fund to counter Israeli actions in Arab East Jerusalem

(Continued from page 1)

ing, the rest will be raised from other Arab governments and businesses.

He added that the capital will be raised by \$100 million in few months.

"I believe it is a very important conference," said Faisal Hussein, the Palestinian official in charge of the Jerusalem portfolio in the Palestinian National Authority, who attended the meeting.

"Such efforts to invest in Jerusalem, to rebuild the city and to help it face the challenges of the next century are very important for us," Mr. Hussein told reporters on the fringes of the conference.

"Jerusalem needs a true effort by the Palestinian and Arab business communities to raise funds to save

Jerusalem from the Israeli settlement policy and halt the Judaisation of the Arab sector of the Holy City," he added.

Mr. Hussein said the JFJC can help in offering jobs to Palestinians in Jerusalem and protecting and developing Arab properties in the Holy City.

The shareholders of the new firm will form a general assembly which will elect a board of directors which will place the remaining 80 per cent of the capital for public subscription.

Anis Qasim, a legal adviser of the JFJC, said that the founders' decision to register the firm in the British Virgin Islands, was for "tax, legal and investment reasons." He did not elaborate.

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Kuwait raises \$2.5b from state sell-offs

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait has raised some \$2.5 billion from a privatisation programme begun in 1994 with further holdings to be sold worth more than \$3 billion, a senior official said Saturday.

The government has sold stakes in more than 20 companies earning more than 750 million dinars (\$2.5 billion), Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) Managing Director Ali Rashid Al Bader told the English-language Arab Times.

Stakes in a further 18 companies valued at about one billion dinars (\$3.3 billion) will go on sale in the next two years, said the head of state-owned KIA, which is overseeing the programme of sells off.

"The purpose of this policy (of privatisation) is to attract private capital in the local stock exchange, while increasing the role of the private sector," he said.

"So far, the results have proven to be successful whereby numerous experts, including from the World Bank, consider KIA's privatisation programme as one of the most successful in the Middle East," he said.

Mr. Bader said the government was considering giving greater access to foreign investors, who at present can only invest in locally listed companies through quoted investment funds.

"The government has been reviewing the country's various economic policies, and one of the most important findings or objectives is to open up the Kuwaiti economy for foreign investors," Mr. Bader said. The privatisation programme so far has mainly involved the sale of shares in companies that were bailed out by the state during an economic crisis in the 1980s and were never intended to stay in government hands.

Open economies attract private cash, Asia-Pacific financiers say

CEBU, Philippines (AFP) — Asia-Pacific economies have to improve their investment climates to win private sector help in financing their development, financiers said here Saturday.

The APEC Financiers Group (AFG) urged ministers from the 18 member economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to remove regulatory bottlenecks, free up the flow of capital and increase information transparency.

The AFG is the primary advisor to the finance ministers and meets ahead of their annual talks to make recommendations for action.

Bankers Association of the Philippines chief economist Johnny Ravolo said that infrastructure was crucial to development, as was the harmonisation of infrastructure within economies.

"There is no point in an economy talking about being a tiger cub when its growth cannot be heard," Mr. Ravolo told a news conference after Friday's meeting of the AFG.

He said there was an infrastructure bottleneck that was a "silent but deadly" obstacle to development.

Mr. Ravolo noted that "practically nothing" binds the APEC member economies except "an

almost uniform agreement that 18 economies are willing to talk to each other and help each other."

He pointed out that capital was an ultimately scarce and a limited resource, and it was information that "provides the signal for choices of allocation of limited resources."

Mr. Ravolo said financial systems and capital markets provide the environment in which the private sector operates, as well as the signals for those operations.

He said AFG agreed on the need for an information centre to act as a clearing house for economic data.

It called for the speeding up of the development of bond markets and access to equity markets for infrastructure development-related projects, which would allow access to long-term funding.

The financiers further agreed on a "roadmap" to the next meeting in Canada, and sought along the way a further inquiry into the setting up of information centres, the Philippines offering to take the lead in that field.

Mr. Ravolo said the AFG also had a brief discussion about the capital adequacy standards of the Bank for International Settlements, in which there was "a considerable mismatch" between the risk weight of members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), at 20 per cent, and non-OECD countries, at 100 per cent.

He said that made the cost of capital for non-members five times higher, and for no apparent reason than because that was what the his said.

"This uneven treatment impacts negatively upon the cost and availability of capital across borders, a consequence that is totally avoidable if an even treatment is provided," the AFG said in a statement.

The AFG said the issue was raised last year in

Kyoto, Japan, "but has not been accorded the necessary further action it deserves."

Rafael Buenaventura, president of the Philippine Commercial International Bank and chairman of the AFG, said the objective should be to "develop the structure and environment to encourage people to invest."

"That is why it is important that your economy is open enough so people will come in," Mr. Buenaventura said.

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Iran hikes fuel prices

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran Saturday increased the costs of gasoline and other fuels by between 20 to 30 per cent as part of efforts to gradually remove massive subsidies, the oil ministry said.

The price of regular gasoline jumped from 130 rials to 160 rials (five U.S. cents) per litre and that of premium rose from 180 rials to 220 rials (seven cents).

The cost of domestic fuel and gas-oil also rose from 30 to 40 rials, the oil ministry said in a statement published in the press.

Fuel prices however are still among the cheapest in the world.

The hike in fuel costs is the third since March 1995, when prices doubled as part of government efforts to gradually remove an annual state subsidy of \$10 billion for oil products.

By raising prices, the government hopes to cut down on the estimated one million barrels per day of domestic oil consumption and divert it for exports amid dwindling crude deposits.

The authorities are however held back by a fear of rising inflation and popular discontent which could be touched off by high fuel prices.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Take the time today to plan your social schedule with your mate, then spend a quiet day together at home. Take special care of your health so that you don't lose any time from business activities and thereby becoming successful.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) A surprise entertainment with a group of friends today will help to pick up your spirits and get you out of that bad mood you've been in lately. Later this evening will be good to go out on the town with close friends.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You may have an interesting investment opportunity in the days ahead, so consider your assets and how much you can afford to risk upon any speculative venture. Later this evening will be good for meeting with knowledgeable people.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Stay around close friends who can be of assistance to you today, however, stay in and enjoy the safety to your home with your mate. Later this evening you can seek out fellow associates and devise a plan of action for a new project.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Avoid a condescending person today who will not only bore you, but will also irritate you to the point of anger. Help out a friend who is having a tough time with career activities and financial dealings.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Be more concerned with your personal interests today, and you'll feel much happier. A close friend will offer to support you in a plan of action you have developed to make your career activities more successful.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Be more charming while out socially today, and you can gain greater prestige from those in authority. Steer clear of an annoying and noisy person this evening and thereby make your life much more enjoyable.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You like a new contact very much, so make a friend out of this person and thereby you can rely upon his or her advice with business activities. Don't allow a fellow associate to distract you from your schedule today.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Don't become involved in a recreation which will mean spending a great deal of money, thereby having sufficient funds for any emergency. Try to spend more time with your mate and plan something romantic for him or her.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you get a chance to do a nice favour for anyone today, do just that and he or she will be quite appreciative. Don't neglect a good friend who you haven't seen for some time and thereby renew old acquaintances.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) If you show others your true feelings today, you can come to a better understanding with them. Be sure to get plenty of rest tonight, for the days ahead are going to be hectic with business activities occupying your mind.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Steer clear of a social activity today which seems as if it would be fun, however, would be quite tiring. Accept a favour from a loyal friend later this evening so that in the days ahead you might need some advice from this person.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	SEK	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.8880	0.6121	1.4420	124.41	1.3907	1667.20	1.3845	6.5770
DE Mark	0.5357	1.0000	0.4936	0.6563	72.71	0.6366	136.63	0.7363	3.4075
GB Sterling	1.6338	2.7545	1.0000	2.3609	203.80	2.2721	2723.87	3.0982	8.2751
CHF Franc	0.6928	1.3854	0.4235	1.0000	166.09	0.7712	93.49	1.1352	5.4756
JP Yen	0.0080	1.3547	0.4815	1.1586	1.0000	1.1174	13.40	152.22	4.5613
CAD Dollar	0.7271	1.4161	0.4358	0.6458	80.74	1.0000	125.36	1.4809	4.0000
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0107	0.3857	0.6884	1342.10	0.8337	1.0000	1.36	3.4031
SEK Krona	0.7271	1.4161	0.4358	0.6458	80.74	1.0000	125.36	1.4809	4.0000
FR Franc	0.1761	0.2969	0.1077	0.2536	21.89	0.2449	33.37	33.3700	1.0000

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	16.90	17.35
WTI	16.90	17.35
Boise	16.90	17.35
Dubai	16.90	17.35
UL Gas	186.00	186.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2668	0.4487	0.1632	0.38478	33.1882
Yemen Dinar	0.2722	0.4542	0.1665	0.3899	33.698
KW Dinar	3.3647	5.57414	2.02265	4.78872	411.353
Dubai Dirham	0.3776	0.63477	0.23288	0.53838	46.922
CY Pound	1.9827	3.3428	1.2128	2.8501	246.688

Metal Prices			
Metal	Bid	Offer	
Gold (oz)	348.7	349.2	
Silver (oz)	31.7	31.8	
Platinum (oz)	361	362	
Al (lb)	0.82	0.83	
CU (3 Months)	2331	2336	
Zinc (3 Months)	1269	1273	
Lead (3 Months)	567	570	
NI (3 Months)	7500	7500	

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)						
Period	1-3	3-6	6-9	9-12	1-3	1-3
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year	Year
USD	6.56	5.88	5.84	6.03	6.21	
DEM	6.00	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	
JPY	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.44	0.50	
FRF	3.18	3.25	3.31	3.35	3.37	
ITL	7.12	7.08	7.00	7.00	6.93	

Main Equity Indices						
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low
New York	DOW JONES	6528.07	48.72	0.75	6527.21	6404.84
Nasdaq	COMP	2751.75	7.28	0.27	2751.75	2700.00
London	FT-SE 100	4236.6	22	0.52	4247.6	4214.6
Paris	CAC 40	2517.97	3.45	0.14	2541.73	2488.72
Frankfurt	DAX	3244.54	36.88	1.15	3244.22	3226.54

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lb)	173.42	Spot
Cocoa (c/lb)	173.42	Spot
Sugar (c/lb)	312	Spot
Wheat (c/lb)	2.5	Spot
Soybean (c/lb)	22.54	Spot
Wheat (c/lb)	140	Spot
Barley (c/lb)	0	Spot
Rice (c/lb)	400	Spot

JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
DE Mark	0.4194	0.4215
CHF Franc	0.4805	0.4826
FR Franc	0.1246	0.1252
NI Guilder	0.3729	0.3748
IT Lira	0.0006	0.0006

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Indians urged to boost savings

BOMBAY (AFP) — The central Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has called for higher domestic savings to fund development in the country. RBI Governor Chakravarty Rangarajan said: "If India wants GDP growth of some seven per cent annually then it would need a domestic investment rate of more than 28 per cent as against the current level of 25 per cent."

Households, government and industry should save more, he said, adding: "All have to make efforts to boost savings. This is very important if we have to emulate the high growth economies of the Far East."

Mr. Rangarajan said India's current savings rate was high, but the demand for funds was outpacing it. "Some of these pressures are a sign of growth."

"Ninety per cent of funds needed for investments are raised within the country from domestic savings while 10 per cent have been coming from outside," he told a conference.

Mr. Rangarajan said the economy during the current fiscal year to March was poised to record a growth of 6.8 per cent even though there has been an industrial slowdown.

"There is some slowdown in industry as well as exports,

but there is no reason to be pessimistic," he said.

Speaking on India's current account deficit and balance of payments position the RBI chief said: "They are under control and we are on a high growth path."

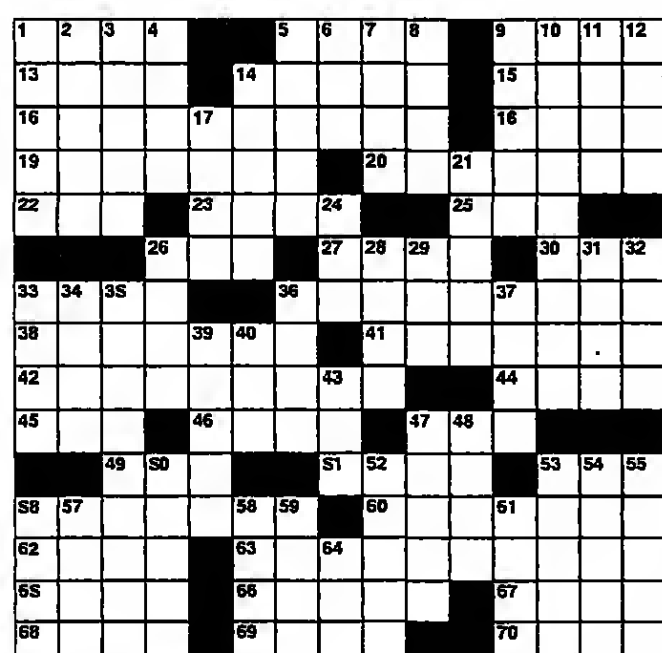
"Industry will record growth of between nine and 10 per cent this year as against 12 per cent the previous year. Mining, oil production and power generation grew slower this year than in the previous year and this is the reason for industrial slowdown," he indicated.

Mr. Rangarajan said India attracted \$2.6 billion overseas investments into industry and the capital markets last year, while in the current year it pulled in \$4.4 billion.

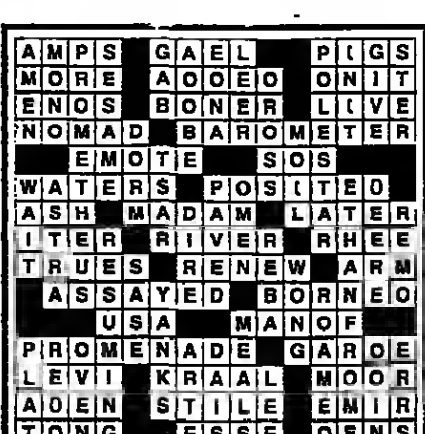
"This is a considerable step-up and Indian industries are now mature to absorb and stand up to foreign inflows," he said.

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS**
- Affection
 - Prose narrative
 - Gas sign
 - Level
 - Cart
 - Involved with
 - Raw, inexperienced person
 - Actress Adams
 - Administrator
 - Talk over
 - Sault — Marie
 - Farmhand unit
 - the ramparts...
 - Wapiti
 - Atoll
 - Motorists' org.
 - Sniggler's catch
 - Treats as a pal
 - Chest of drawers
 - Spells
 - Generates
 - Complain
 - First named
 - Inactive
 - Foxy
 - Snooze
 - Mexican sandwich
 - Informal
 - US president
 - Detour
 - Construction unit
 - Trustworthy
 - Cagliari cash
 - Vexed
 - Bridge item
 - Islets
 - Memo
 - Hardy heroine



by Dorothy B. Martin



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- DOWN**
- Lithuanians
 - Obvious
 - Locality of a crime
 - Terminates
 - More secure
 - In the past
 - Beneficial
 - Opposed to
 - Releive

- Perseverance
- Elevator name
- Negative replies
- Ruin
- And others: abbr.
- European capital
- Before
- Existence: Lat.
- News
- Blunder
- Arabian gulf
- Helper: abbr.
- Delightful place
- Sea eagle
- Fabulous
- Jacques of song
- Begrudge
- Cuts
- Actor Bymes
- No longer working: abbr.
- Public spat
- Proprietor of a manor
- Buenos —
- Sharp crest
- Russian money
- Cartographer's work
- Abounds
- Exploit
- Rose's
- sweetheart
- Norse god
- Pianist Peter
- Kill
- Touch lightly

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Industrialists bemoan unfair protection margin

LOCAL MANUFACTURERS of products similar to those imported from outside have been hit hard by the reduction in customs that took effect in February as the margin of customs protection has noticeably contracted, a study by the Amman Chamber of Industry has indicated. Analysing the effects of the reduction in customs, the study stressed that this measure would have a big negative impact on investments in Jordan.

The study said that the customs ceiling under the oew policy has been lowered to 40 per cent on all manufactured products except alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco which carried customs duties of 180 per cent, 100 per cent and 70 per cent respectively. Under the previous policy, customs on manufactured goods not only exceeded the 40 per cent level but were also subject to a 20 per cent additional fees. In other words, the imported products were levied more than 60 per cent in customs and fees. As such, local manufacturers have lost protection between five to 25 per cent depending on the product.

As to production input, local manufacturers had to pay between five per cent and 21 per cent in additional fees. This shows that the difference in customs and additional fees levied on the imported products and those imposed on the inputs of locally-produced substitutes has narrowed to become no more than 10 per cent to most cases and about 35 per cent in few other rare cases. In the past, the difference would reach 45 per cent, the study pointed out.

The Chamber of Industry said in its study that "reducing the customs on imported finished products without reducing fees and customs on inputs for similar locally-produced industries has grossly damaged local manufacturers." As examples, the study indicated that the protection margin on chocolate and textile industries has been reduced from 45 per cent to 35 per cent and on the marble industry the reduction came down from 45 per cent to only 10 per cent. For other industries such as the manufacturing of ovens and refrigerators or television the reduction in the protection margin was from 25 per cent to 10 per cent and from 20 per cent to 10 per cent respectively.

The study reminded the government that the new measures were taken despite repeated promises during the discussions over the sales tax that the protection margin will never fall below 30 per cent for local industries.

"This is a very dangerous situation that entails great damage to the industrial sector," the study warned. "There would be no investor willing to invest if the difference in customs does not exceed 10 per cent after having been 45 per cent and 35 per cent." The chamber said this problem was on top of other unfair measures being suffered by Jordanian industrialists especially with regard to the implementation of the sales tax (Al Dastour).

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



"I'm still looking for a tasty low-fat gravy substitute. I guess we can take cough syrup off the list."

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

CORFE

TUSEA

DOBTU

TYFARC

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: A

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: FLAKE BOOTH TROUGH NIPPLE
Answer: What the plumber decided to do about marriage - HE TOOK THE PLUNGE

Board of directors recommends continued distribution of cash dividends at a rate of 50%

Higher prices of paper and raw materials curb profitability of market leader Al Ra'i

By Samir Ghawi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite higher earnings from sales and advertisements, the Jordan Press Foundation which publishes the Al Ra'i Arabic daily and the Jordan Times was negatively affected by higher international prices of paper and other raw materials that jumped more than 100 per cent last year.

With newspaper sales amounting to JD2,305,322 and advertisements providing JD7,264,509 compared to JD2,262,989 and JD7,278,203 respectively in 1995, the Jordan Press Foundation (JPF) posted

total earnings of JD9,569,831 last year, slightly higher than the JD9,541,192 recorded at the end of 1995.

However, if the earnings from the commercial printing press and other income are included, the overall total earnings show a slight 1.5 per cent drop to JD10,419,674 from the total posted in 1995.

According to the 11th annual report of the JPF, advertising accounted for 69 per cent of the total earnings while sales represented 22 per cent. The commercial

printing press provided seven per cent with the remaining two per cent of earnings being classified as other income.

But as a result of the higher costs of paper and other raw materials, the JPF's production costs surged by 18 per cent, from JD6,979,979 in 1995 to JD9,043,417 in 1996. Nearly 56 per cent of this amount represented the cost on raw material input whereas salaries and other administrative and selling costs accounted for 26 per cent and 11 per cent respectively of the total expenditures last year. Depreciation totalling JD617,867 represented the remaining cost of seven per cent.

The company noted in its report that the cost of production input has improved as the prices of paper have declined noticeably in the last quarter of the last year. Consequently, a gradual drop in production costs has resulted.

The following figures show the general performance of the company at the end of 1996:

1- Current assets grew by eight per cent to reach JD6,327,63. This increase reflected a rise of 16 per cent in JPF's working capital which amounted to JD3,031,105 and registered an average turnover of 76 per cent.

assets were JD372,295 in cash at hand and at banks, JD221,630 in post-dated cheques and cheques under collection, JD854,383 in long-term bank deposits carrying interest between nine and 9.5 per cent and receivables for a total of JD1,208,354. The largest portion of current assets was in raw materials and spare parts inventories which stood at JD3.53 million at the end of last year.

In this regard the report highlighted that the return on assets was 26 per cent, the inventory turnover achieved 1.5 times approximately and the turnover of fixed assets reached 1.4 times.

2- Fixed assets totalled JD6.77 million after depreciation compared to JD7.10 million at the end of 1995. Taking into consideration that the accumulated depreciation has reached JD2.32 million, the main net fixed assets at the end of last year were equipment and machinery valued at JD3.79 million and buildings valued at JD1.40 million.

3- Current liabilities amounted to JD5.05 million spread over accounts payable (JD2,347), bills payable (JD545,408), current portion of a loan (JD500,000), reserves and other payables (JD908,771) and dividends payable (JD1 million). The total of current liabilities at the end of 1995 stood at JD3.25 million of which JD1 million were also dividends payable.

Regarding bank credits, JPF opted to switch from short-term debt into long-term debt as the company's financial statement showed no bank credit advances in 1996 compared to JD338,241 that showed in this category in 1995.

Instead, the statement showed JD500,000 as a portion of a long-term loan that would fall due within one year. The long-term portion of the loan amounted to JD250,000.

Despite this arrangement JPF continued to enjoy three credit lines of advances of JD200,000 from each of the Cairo Amman Bank, Jordan Gulf Bank and Bank of Jordan. The credits which were not utilised and which carry interest of 12.5 per cent or 13 per cent were secured by the company's own guarantee.

As to the long-term debt, the report said that it was a JD1 million credit from the Social Security Corporation. The first of four equal instal-

ments of the credit, carrying an 11.5 per cent interest, was repaid on Sept. 30, 1996 and the last will be made by March 31, 1998.

4- Capital accounts rose slightly and reached JD9,799,295 despite the decline in net profit last year. The amount comprised the JD2 million capital and JD4.5 million of premiums collected when the capital was doubled in 1993. The obligatory reserve remained at JD1,276,781 as no additional funds were put into the reserve which should be replenished each year by 10 per cent of the annual net profit until the total of the obligatory reserve reaches 25 per cent of the capital. At such a level, the company may stop the mentioned 10 per cent allocation.

5- Noting that the net profit in 1996 amounted to JD1.07 million (compared to JD1.65 million in 1995) and by adding JD294,344 of retained earnings to the 1996 net profit, the total of profit available for distribution becomes JD1.37 million. As such, the JPF board of directors opted to continue distributing JD1 million in cash dividends at a rate of 50 per cent. Of the remaining JD371,346, JD200,000 were taken to voluntary reserves and JD171,346 returned to retained earnings.

As such, the general assembly meeting on April 12 will review the company's performance last year and weigh the recommendation of the board of directors to distribute JD1 million in cash dividends at a rate of 50 per cent.

The general assembly will also listen to the chairman's address which will highlight the visits of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan to the premises of Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times last October and also the visit of Prince Shaker Ben Zaid in 1995.

Other highlights will include the process of computerisation at the JPF and the linkage of Al Ra'i to the Internet from April 1996. The Jordan Times was linked to the Internet from October 1996.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - SHMEISANI											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 05/04/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / B	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	PERCENT
269.000	210.000	ARAB BANK	11.5	1.59	1	40	10740	269.50	251.00	.50	.19
3.600	2.760	BANK OF JORDAN	10.7	0.00	1	201	611	2.62	2.96	.14	.14
3.210	.880	MID. EAST INT. BK.	68.3	0.00	1	750	253	1.05	1.01	.04	.04
5.100	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.7	2.91	1	50	339	4.40	4.75	.05	.05
2.950	2.440	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	19.6	0.00	1	100	270	2.65	2.70	.05	.05
4.120	3.480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	18.2	0.00	1	100	278	4.78	3.79	.79	.16
2.850	1.200	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITHA)	.7	12.93	1	250	290	1.20	1.16	.04	.04
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 191.21 %CHG: +0.16											
2.230	1.850	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	7.7	7.80	4	2500	5125	2.05	2.05	-	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 118.31 %CHG: 0.00											
1.830	1.430	JOR. ELECTRIC. PWR.	11.6	7.19	7	513	886	1.69	1.62	.02	.02
1.540	1.020	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	1	250	154	1.02	1.02	.01	.01
3.720	2.990	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	11.9	6.67	10	6927	20780	3.09	3.00	.09	.09
1.220	.960	JARSA EDUCATION	9	0.00	1	250	250	1.00	1.00	-	-
2.230	1.650	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.55	9	1900	3140	1.69	1.68	.01	.01
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 103.88 %CHG: -0.83											
1.260	.930	ATTANOR	9	0.00	2	1000	1020	.97	1.02	.05	.05
3.730	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.2	2.82	16	1912	6622	3.50	3.54	.04	.04
3.500	2.710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	24.2	0.00	2	68	215	3.22	3.18	.04	.04
6.100	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	18.3	3.11	1	1000	6008	6.10	6.05	.05	.05
10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.3	7.84	6	141	1426	10.20	10.20	-	-
3.260	2.450	INDUSTRIAL CORP. JOR.	29.8	0.00	1	350	776	2.20	2.22	.02	.02
7.950	6.420	JOR. MONSTER	8.7	3.68	3	300	2040	6.10	6.05	.05	.05
4.100	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	20.3	5.45	2	250	918	3.72	3.67	.05	.05
7.250	5.650	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	8.2	3.79	1	800	3280	6.65	6.60	.05	.05
2.310	1.600	JOR. PAPER MANF.	9	0.00	1	150	1115	1.55	1.50	.05	.05
6.990	5.250	ARAB ALUMINA. TV. IND.	13.0	4.20	3	375	1300	4.75	4.75	-	-
.980	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	1	500	420	.56	.56	-	-
1.400	1.050	ARAB PAPER CORP. TR.	1.7	0.11	2	500	1021	1.05	1.04	.01	.01
1.500	1.050	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	1.7	0.11	2	500	595	1.05	1.05	-	-
1.540	.730	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	1	1000	394	.60	.59	.01	.01
2.250	2.160	GULF CHEM. INDOS.	59.5	0.00	1	1000	112	2.18	2.25	.07	.07
3.720	2.130	NATL. CARB. WIRE. MFAC	14.7	0.00	1	50	115	2.15	2.30	.05	.05
1.270	.570	JOR. SULPHUR CHEM.	7	0.00	10	2300	1561	.60	.61	.01	.01
2.740	1.420	UNIV. FORM. INDOS.	4.6	11.33	12	3100	5852	1.57	1.50	.02	.02
1.820	1.140	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	16.3	0.00	50	79150	34233	1.32	1.30	.02	.02
1.270	.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	23.9	0.00	12	3100	7723	.90	.88	.02	.02
2.400	1.750	EL. CRY. READY WEAR	9	0.00	2	350	611	1.81	1.90	.01	.01
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 127.07 %CHG: -0.39											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 151.46 %CHG: +0.12											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 05/04/1997											
4	.690	.380	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	14.8	0.00	6	2150	796	.38	.37	.01
	.790	.440	JOP. TRAGE FAC.	11.7	0.00	9	47500	18720	.44	.44	-
	.850	.580	UNION INT. 50	24.1	0.00	1	5100	14.98	.58	.58	-
	.840	.370	ARAB FIN. INVT.	9	0.00	14	14000	5622	.37	.40	.01
	.950	.470	AL-SHARQ INT. 75	5	0.00	10	15662	9336	.47	.47	-
	.840	.200	JOR. INDS. MATCH-VENTO	9	0.00	2	7200	496	.22	.23	.01
	.690	.400	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	11.9	0.00	10	1500	190	.40	.40	-
	.720	.490	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	4	1610	814	.52	.51	.01
	.850	.400	NATL. MULT. BEG. MANICO	8	0.00	20	57654	5865	.46	.46	.02
	.990	.720	JORDAN STEEL	9	0.00	4	14000	1200	.75	.75	-
	.750	.600	MID-EAST PHARM. 75	8	0.00	2	850	306	.61	.61	-
	1.330	.920	UNION TOBACCO 75	8	0.00	1	250	168	.92	.92	-
	.770	.570	RAB PHARM. 65	7	0.00	3	3300	756	.58	.57	.01
	.660	.390	INDOS.	26.5	0.00	3	600	258	.39	.39	-
	.760	.580	PEARL SAN. P. CONV.	8	0.00	2	70	45	.67	.64	.03
	.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	8	0.00	3	1250	812	.65	.65	-
	1.020	.800	ARAB TRF. FOOD FACT.	62.5	0.00	2	500	439	.85	.89	.04
	.870	.530	MID. EAST COMPLEX	9.0	0.00	20	39050	30408	.76	.77	.01
GRAND TOTAL 131 192518 98552											

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National team prepares for World Cup qualifier against UAE

By Adnan Tobasi
in Manama and
Aleen Bannayan in Amman

THE KINGDOMS' national soccer team began final practice sessions in the Bahraini capital Manama in preparation for their Asian World Cup qualifiers which kick off April 8.

Jordan will be facing hosts Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in their first round/first leg Group 3 matches. The second leg of the qualifiers will be held in Sharjah, UAE starting April 19 and only the group winner will qualify to the second round.

The Kingdom's team arrived in Manama Friday and had an extensive training session Saturday.

Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) Deputy Chairman Saleh Irsheidat and Secretary-General Hisham Asfour will join Jordan's 31-member delegation Sunday after representing the Kingdom in the meetings of the General Assembly of the Asian Soccer Confederation which concluded in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Team coach Mohammad Awad said the team was in high spirits hoping to qualify to the second round for the first time in the Kingdom's history.

This will be the fourth time Jordan plays in World Cup qualifying matches after taking part in first round qualifiers for Mexico 96, Italy 90, and USA 94.

The team coach said he expected striker Badran Al Shaqran could be a formidable force as he was fit and quickly adapted to his teammates' play.

Shaqran joined the team only Thursday after taking leave from Kamaz Club of the Tatar Republic where he is now a professional player. Coaches had to drop striker Aref Hussein from the lineup in favour of Shaqran.

The Kingdom's team had an intense four-day training camp in Aqaba before leaving for Manama after the JSF failed to arrange two friendly matches against Qatar and Iraq.

Coach Awad said he believed Group 3 teams are very close and that the Kingdom's team had a good chance at the qualifiers although both opponents are experienced and have prepared well.

The UAE, a 1990 World Cup qualifier, lost the latest of their two friendly matches 2-0 to Syria and 4-1 to Norway. Their other results were a 1-1 draw with Syria and a 2-1 win over Lebanon.

The UAE coach said his team was not as well-prepared as he would have wanted it to be adding that he would not be underestimating any opponent as all three teams had prepared well for the qualifiers.

The Bahraini team beat Bangladesh 2-1 in their latest match and had lost 3-1 to Kuwait.

Bahrain's Austrian coach was optimistic about his team's chances. His team played Oman.

Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Bangladesh, and Nepal to prepare for the matches.

Jordan's record in eight friendly internationals included three defeats, three goalless draws and two wins, both over Oman.

At the start of their training camps abroad the Jordanian team had two matches against Lebanon losing 1-0 in Beirut and drawing 0-0 in Amman.

Against the Iraqi team Jordan twice lost 1-0 in Baghdad while both matches against Syria ended in goalless draws.

The Kingdom's only wins were 2-0 and 4-1 in Muscat on the third leg of the team's training camps abroad. The team's training camps and preparations cost the JSF over JD 60,000.

Thirty-six Asian countries will contest the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into two groups. Some groups have already begun their qualifiers.

Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.

Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.

Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.

Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao.

Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.

Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.

Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.

Group 8: China, Turkmenistan.

Vietnam, Tajikistan.

Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan.

Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round where the teams will be divided into two groups.

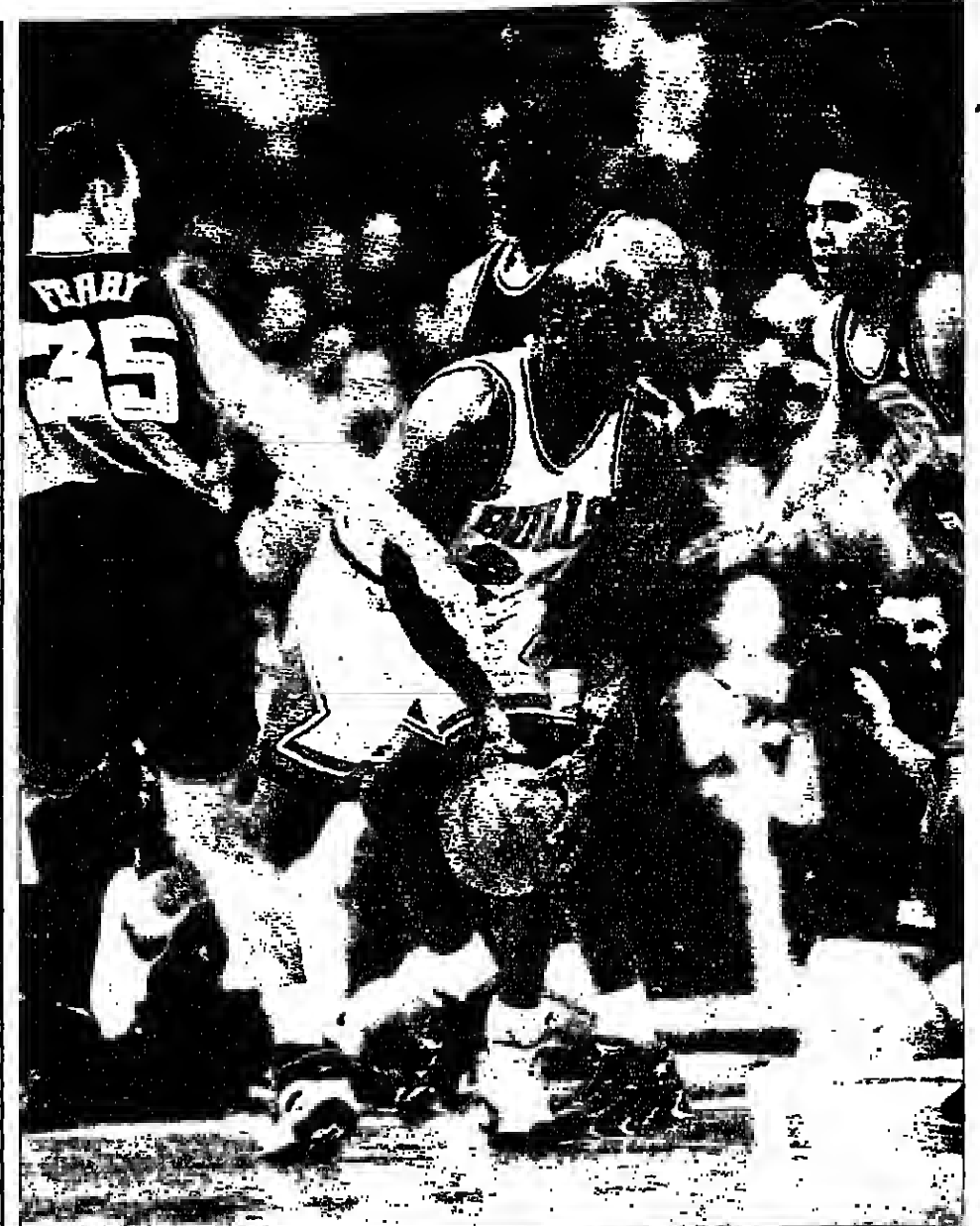
The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

Jordan's delegation includes referee Dahham Egeidat, team manager Abullatif Abdul Majid, coaches Mohammad Awad and Adnan Masud, goalkeepers' coach Basem Tayyem, and physiotherapist Hussein Atallah.

The Kingdom's initial lineup includes Mu'taz Rishah, Yousef Ammouri, Mohammad Mahadin, Amjad Taher, Hussein Shananeh, Faisal Ibrahim, Subhi Suleiman, Jamal Abu Abed, Adnan Awad, Nart Yada, Jiryes Tadros and Badran Shaqran.

The team also includes Ahmad Abu Nasouh, Mohammad Abu Daoud, Mohammad Khaz'ali, Abdallah Abu Zame'h, Isam Mahmoud, Munir Abu Hantash, Bassam Al Khaib, Ahmad Khalil, Ja'far Hammad and Hassounah Sheikh.



Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan is pressured by Cleveland Cavaliers' Danny Ferry (L), Tyrone Hill (C), and Antonio Lang (R) during the first quarter of their NBA game in Chicago. Chicago defeated Cleveland 84-71 (Reuters photo)

Nine countries to compete in 4th Arab Junior Weightlifting Championship

By Roufan Nahhas and
JSYTF press committee

AMMAN — Nine countries will participate in the 4th Arab Junior Weightlifting Championship scheduled to take place April 7-11 at the Sports Palace at Al Hussein Youth City.

Athletes from Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Tunisia, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Palestine in addition to Jordan will take part in the event hosted in Jordan for the first time.

The JWF has sent invitations to 18 countries and only 9 countries sent confirmations before the end of March deadline.

Jordan clinched a gold medal in 1996 championship which took place in Lebanon by player Ayed Al

Khawaldeh. The Jordanian team went through extensive training under the supervision of Chinese coach Bing Ching and Jordanian coach Ahmad Daghes.

Participating athletes:

Egypt

Ahmad Abed Al

Maqoud, Mohammad

Tantawi, Mohammad Fahmi

Abdulfattah, Ahmad Samir

Abdallah, Ibrahim Said

Shama'a, Mohammad Musa

Deeb, Hani Abdulkareem

Basloumi, Mohammad

Qaim, Ibrahim Mohammad

Ibrahim, Mahmoud

Mohammad Ahmad,

Waleed Moa'd and

Mohammad Shabani.

Lebanon

Zaki Abdullah, Hussam Al

Ayoubi, Nayef Sukar,

Mohammad Sharif, Joseph

Dawoud and Samih

Mogalad.

Libya

Issam Taleb Arhounieh,

Imad Ali Shanak, Othman

Mohammad Abu Zeid,

Mohammad Mokhtar

Shanak and Hamzeb Ahmad

Ahu Ghaila.

Palestine

Abdulaouf Abu Assi,

Tarek Abu Zeid, Husni

Thaber, Nahmi Abu Assi

and Wasfi Halaq.

Tunisia

Adnan Beo Sbeikha,

Yousef Sba'ali, Mohammad

Majeri, Ashraf Zirawi and

Nizar Omri.

Saudi Arabia

Saleh Abdullah, Bader

Saeed Salmi, Hussein Ali,

Faisal Slais, Abdullah

Dowsri, Ali Darwish, Zaki

Slais, Hussein Saeed.

Hussio Saeed, Ahellah

Abed Wahed, Mohammad

Zahrani, Abdallah Ayad,

Oman Slais and Munir Al

Darwish.

Jordan

Hisham Amareh, Ibrahim

Madani, Ali Jahri,

Mohammad Fakhri, Daoud

Haboub, Mohammad Taim,

Mushab Aboudi, Osama

Nahil, Khaled Ayoub, Omar

Taiseer, Mohammad Jalouqa

and Ala'a Mohammad.

Syria and Kuwait have not

submitted the oamces of

their athletes.

The JWF's 1997 plan

includes at least six local

championships in addition

to taking part in tourna-

ments abroad like the

Saddam Championship in

Iraq and the Antalya

Championship in Turkey.

Doctors cannot detect Magic's HIV virus

LOS ANGELES (AFP) —

Earvin "Magic" Johnson's

doctors say the former basketball star's

HIV levels are "undetectable"

in blood tests but are not the miracle

cure his wife would have hoped.

A statement here Friday

from physicians David Ho and Michael Mellman

countered tabloid reports

that Johnson was gravely ill.

"Earvin is doing fine,"

the statement read.

"Currently he is on combination drug

therapy, which has reduced

HIV's presence in his blood to undetectable

levels."

The doctors also disputed

quotes from Johnson's

wife Cookie in the April

issue of Ebony magazine

calling Magic's showing

no trace of HIV a miracle

from God.

But infinitesimal levels

of HIV do not mean

Johnson is cured, only

that he has fought the dis-

ease to the best of mod-

ern science and prevented

HIV from advancing into

AIDS.

"We must emphasize

that 'undetectable' does

not equal 'absent,'" the

statement said.

"It would be premature

and incorrect to say

Earvin is 'virus-free.' We

are very pleased he has

adhered to his daily regi-

men and that is reflected

in his good health."

T-Wolves on trail of 1st playoff berth

MINNEAPOLIS (R) —

Tom Gugliotta's 12-foot

jump with 16 seconds left

was the clincher as the

Timberwolves scored the

last 10 points of the game

Friday to beat the

Washington Bullets 97-95

and inch closer to a playoff

berth.

Kevin Garnett scored 22

points to lead the

Timberwolves, who

reduced their Magic num-

ber for clinching a playoff

berth to one. The Wolves

will earn their first-ever

post-season berth with one

more win or one loss by the

Sacramento Kings.

"We have shown the abil-

ity to stick around in games

and execute down the

stretch," Minnesota coach

Flip Saunders said. "We

wanted to keep ourselves

in the position to win the game

and we did that."

Juwan Howard and Rod

Strickland both had 21

points for the Bullets, who

had their six-game winning

streak snapped but

remained tied with the

Cleveland Cavaliers for the

final playoff berth in the

Eastern Conference.

"The Timberwolves

played great," Strickland

said. "They put the heat

on."

In Atlanta, Christian

Laettner scored 12 of his 30

points in the third quarter

as the Hawks defeated Detroit

103-89 to move into a tie

with the Pistons for fourth

place in the Eastern

Conference.

Atlanta beat the Pistons

for the first time in four

meetings this season.

Detroit had been the only

team the Hawks had not

defeated.

The Hawks, winners of

eight of their last nine,

moved within one game of

New York for third spot in

the east after the Knicks lost

to Orlando. Atlanta hosts

New York Saturday.

Mookie Blaylock record-

ed 21 points, 11 rebounds

and eight assists for the

Hawks, who improved to

34-4 at the Omni.

Detroit's Grant Hill had

his second straight triple-

double and third to four

games with 22 points, 12

rebounds and 12 assists.

In Chicago, Scottie

Pippen shook off a horren-

dous first half to make 6-of-

7 shots in scoring 15 third-

quarter points as the

Chicago Bulls defeated the

Cleveland Cavaliers 84-71.

Pippen, 0-for-7 from the

floor in the first half, keyed

a 13-2 burst early in the

third quarter, and another

10-2 run over the end of the

period. Michael Jordan led

Chicago with 22 points, but

had just eight after the half.

The league-best Bulls

improved to 64-10.

Tyrone Hill had 18 points

to lead Cleveland.

The Bulls played without

their top reserve, forward

Toni Kukoc, who re-injured

his right foot before the

game. But they got a much-

needed lift with the debut

of recently signed forward

Brian Williams, who had

six points and two

rebounds.

In New York, Penny

Hardaway scored 23 points

Jones caps special night with winning hit for Braves

ATLANTA (R) — Chipper Jones delivered a happy ending on a special night in Atlanta Friday as he drove in the go-ahead run in the eighth to boost the Braves to a 5-4 win over the Chicago Cubs in the first regular-season game at their new Turner Field home.

"This is a great win," said Jones. "I had a feeling about tonight."

"It was cool tonight. All the guys were up for the pre-game ceremony," he said. "Hank (Aaron) walking out of center field gave me a big bump. The whole team was pumped up."

Everything did not go smoothly at first.

The game was delayed for six minutes in the bottom of the first inning due to a power outage that was caused when a car ran into a transformer outside the stadium.

Then the Braves, who lost two of three in Houston before coming home to open their new park, fell behind and trailed 4-2 in the seventh before mounting their charge.

Brad Clontz (1-0) pitched 1 1/3 hitless innings to get the win. Mark Wohlers picked up his second save.

Following the game, there was a fireworks display honoring the National League champion Braves as the team of the '90s.

That's kind of cool. We're 70 games better than anyone else," Jones said, defending the Braves' claim.

Terry Adams (0-1) took the loss for the Cubs, who are 0-4.

At Florida, Reggie Sanders tied a career high with six RBIs, including a three-run homer that began a six-run seventh inning, as the Cincinnati Reds rallied for a 9-7 victory over the Florida Marlins.

The Reds erased a 6-3 deficit with their big rally.

"I was looking for something over the plate, he gave me a fastball right where I was looking," said Sanders. "I took an easy swing and I don't think I can hit a ball any harder."

Jeff Conine, who is 9-for-15 for the season, and Charles Johnson hit back-to-back homers for Florida in the fifth.

Kent Mercker (1-0) picked up the win.

Cincinnati's Hal Morris went 0-for-4 to end a 32-game hit streak dating back to last season.

In Montreal, former Expo Larry Walker hit his league-leading third home run and drove in two as the Colorado Rockies handed Montreal its first loss of the season 5-4.

Walker delivered an RBI double in a two-run first inning, then led off the sixth with a homer.

In Houston, Jeff Bagwell's one-out single in the bottom of the 11th inning scored Ray Montgomery with the winning run as the Houston Astros edged the winless St.

Louis Cardinals 3-2.

Russ Springer (1-0) pitched a scoreless 11th for his first victory as an Astro. Reliever Eric Ludwick allowed one run and two hits while retiring only one batter for St. Louis (0-4).

In Los Angeles, Billy Ashley and rookie Wilton Guerrero each drove in runs in the seventh inning to lift the Los Angeles Dodgers to their third straight win, 5-3 over the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Tom Candiotti (1-0), forced out of the starting rotation, picked up the win with two scoreless innings of relief. Todd Worrell worked a 1-2-3 ninth for his second save.

Dave Wainhouse took the loss.

Raul Mondesi hit a solo homer — his second in as many games — in the eighth for Los Angeles.

In San Diego, Greg Vaughn hit a pair of solo homers and Wally Joyner added another as the San Diego Padres used a pair of five-run innings to power their way past the Philadelphia Phillies 13-3.

Tim Worrell gave up two runs and four hits over seven innings for the win. Bobby Muoz was the loser.

In San Francisco, Glenallen Hill's RBI single snapped a tie and keyed a three-run seventh inning as the San Francisco Giants defeated the New York Mets 6-4.

Hingis express rolls along

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, South Carolina (R) — The Martina Hingis express rolled on at the Family Circle Cup tournament Friday as the world number one took just 49 minutes to beat German Wiltrud Probst 6-2, 6-0 to reach the semifinals.

The 16-year-old Swiss, the youngest person ever to reach the top of the rankings, is now 29-0 this year and has fun every step of the way.

"Well, why shouldn't I?" she said. "I have no reason not to enjoy anything. I became the youngest number one in the world. I play great tennis and I can show the crowd that I really enjoy it. That's what I do."

Hingis will face 14th seed Brenda Schultz-McCarthy, who boomed 15 aces in upsetting Olympic champion Lindsay Davenport 4-6, 6-4, 6-2.

"You obviously know it's going to come really hard," Davenport said about the Dutch woman's vaunted serve. "But she served pretty consistently today at a very high rate of speed."

Despite running a high temperature brought on by a virus, third-seeded Monica Seles mirrored Hingis's ease in advancing by sweeping seventh seed Anke Huber of Germany 6-3, 6-0.

Seles meets fifth-seeded Spaniard Conchita Martinez, a 6-1, 6-3 winner over South Africa's Amanda Coetzer.

After an initial feeling out in the first few games, Hingis found a groove against Probst, a qualifier who reached the quarters after her last two opponents, Magdalena Maleeva and Irina Spirlea, both withdrew with wrist injuries.

"I found a real good rhythm with her," Hingis said. "She just gave me time to make it slow and take it easy and that was very important."

Hingis was pleased by her quarter-final breather.

"I like it better this way," she said. "I mean, everybody likes to have an easy match. I looked at the draw the first day when I came here and it was nine of the top 10 players and I was like 'oh, I just had a tough tournament in Key Biscayne, not again.'"

Seles also needed just 49 minutes. "It was hot out there," she said. "I didn't want to stay out there that long. I wasn't feeling well, so I just said go out there and keep the points short and attack."

Australia, United States ahead 2-0 in Davis Cup quarters

LONDON (AP) — Andre Agassi overcame gusting winds and a slew of unforced errors to beat Sjeog Schalken 7-6 (8-6), 6-4, 7-6 (7-2), and Jim Courier rallied for a five-set victory against Jan Siemerink, giving the United States a 2-0 lead over the Netherlands in their Davis Cup quarterfinal.

Earlier Friday, Australia cruised into a 2-0 lead over the depleted Czech Republic while Italy took a surprise 2-0 advantage over Spain. Courier defeated Siemerink 4-6, 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7-4), 6-3 on the hard courts at the Palisades Tennis Club, the first time in his nine-year pro career that he's won a match after losing the first two sets.

The United States could clinch the best-of-five series Saturday with a victory in the doubles. The winner advances to the semifinals against the Australia-Czech Republic quarterfinal winner.

In Pesaro, Italy, Omar Camporese came from two sets down to score a 6-7 (8-10), 6-7 (4-7), 6-1, 6-3, 6-3 victory over Spain's Carlos Moya. A losing finalist at this year's Australian Open, Moya is world No. 8 while Camporese is 156.

In the second singles, Italy's top player, Renzo Furlan, downed Albert Costa 4-6, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 in the second singles match.

On grass in Adelaide, Pat Rafter scored a 6-1, 7-6 (9-7), 4-6, 6-4 victory over Martin Damm and Mark Philippoussis then overpowered late replacement David Rikl 6-1, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4. Left-hander Rikl stood in for Jiri Novak who woke with a fever Friday. The Czechs were already without Bohdan Ulihrach, Daniel Vacek and Slava Dosedel and also had been hit by the retirement from Davis Cup play of stalwart Petr Korda.

With the world's top doubles pair of Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde facing Rikl and Pavel Vizner on Saturday,



Italy's Davis Cup player Omar Camporese (L) hugs trainer Adriano Panatta as they celebrate his victory in the Davis Cup quarter-final singles match against Spain's Carlos Moya. Camporese surprisingly upset Moya by 6-7 6-7 6-1 6-3 6-3 (Reuters photo)

the Australians will be confident of clinching a semifinal play even before Sunday's reverse singles.

At Vaxjo in Sweden, Thomas Engqvist beat South African Grant Stafford 7-5, 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 before Wayne Ferreira topped Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman 6-3, 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (7-3). Camporese, who nearly retired in 1993 following a bad elbow injury, needed three hours and 41 minutes to win a battle of nerves against 20-year-old Moya in a tense indoor quarterfinal match at the Pesaro sports palace.

He wasted two set points in the opening set and lost

both the first two sets on tiebreaks.

But Moya's game crumbled as he was broken twice in each of the next two and a noisy crowd of 5,000 got behind the Italian. In the battle to get back into the world group qualifying round, Thomas Muster returned to Davis Cup action for Austria and helped his team to a 2-0 lead over Croatia. Muster threatened to quit playing Davis Cup last year after storming off court in Brazil complaining at the rowdy behaviour of the home fans.

But he decided to return and his team was helped by

an injury to Croatia's star player, Goran Ivanisevic, who limped out his match against Gilbert Schaller with severe leg cramps while trailing 6-3, 6-4, 6-7 (3-7), 2-6, 3-1. World No. 2 Muster then made it 2-0 with a 6-0, 6-4, 3-6, 6-1 victory over Sasha Hirzon.

Britain went into its match with Zimbabwe without its two stars, World No. 15 Tim Henman and No. 36 Greg Rusedski, both injured, and fielded players ranked in the 260s. Jamie Delgado squandered an early lead and tumbled 2-6, 6-3, 6-1, 6-3 to Wayne Black. But Andrew Richardson, a 6-foot-7 (2.00 meter) left-hander, scored a 3-6, 6-4, 1-6, 6-4, 6-4 over Byron Black, who is ranked 46 in the world, and the score was tied at 1-1.

In other Euro-Africa Zone action, in Group 1, it was: Slovakia 2, Israel 0; and Belgium 1, Denmark 1. In the Asia-Oceania Zone, Group 1, it was: New Zealand 2, Indonesia 0; and South Korea 2, China 0. In Group 2 play, it was: Pakistan 2, Singapore 0; and Iran 1, Taiwan 0. The second Iran-Taiwan match was suspended because of darkness. Also, Lebanon leads Thailand 2-0. In Group 2 playoffs, Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong split 1-1.

In Friday's American Zone action, it was: Canada 2, Venezuela 0, Chile 1, Argentina 1 in Group 1; Colombia 2, Peru 0 and Paraguay 1, Uruguay 1 in Group 2; and Cuba 2, Puerto Rico 0 and El Salvador 1, Haiti 1 in playoffs.



Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia grimaces in pain as he receives first aid from his team captain Zeljko Franulovic during his match against Austria's Gilbert Schaller. Leg cramps forced Ivanisevic to retire from his European/African zone group one Davis Cup singles to give Austria a 1-0 lead over Croatia (Reuters photo)

Salmon slam shocks Indians

ANAHEIM (R) — Tim Salmon smashed a grand slam homer in the bottom of the 11th to give the Anaheim Angels a rousing 8-6 victory Friday over the Cleveland Indians.

The Indians, who had escaped Anaheim's bases loaded, none-out threat in the 10th inning, took a 6-4 lead in the top of the 11th on a two-run double by Tony Fernandez.

In the bottom half, they sent out Paul Sboye, who is filling in for ace closer Jose Mesa while he stands trial for rape. The Angels loaded the bases again with no outs and this time did not waste the opportunity.

Salmon worked the count full before belting the grand slam over the left field fence. "He threw me a fastball and I just hit it out," said Salmon, who had been just 2-12 at the plate.

Eric Plunk had rescued the Indians earlier after angels filled the bases in 10th. Plunk retired pinch-hitter Jack Howell on a popout before Gary Disarcina lined to center fielder Grissom, whose throw nailed Hollins out at the plate.

In Oakland, the New York Yankees' bullpen let them down as the Athletics rallied for a 4-2 victory over the world series champions. Jason Giambi crushed a two-run homer off David Weathers in the eighth and the Athletics added another run to overtake New York and spoil a fine performance by starter David Wells in his Yankee debut.

The Yankees, whose one-two relief combination of Mariano Rivera and John Wetteland keyed their championship run last season, lost Wetteland to free agency and have shifted Rivera from set-up man extraordinaire to the closer role.

Last season the Yankees lost only twice in 81 games in which they led after seven innings.

Mark Acre won in relief of promising rookie Steve Karsay and Bill Taylor got the save.

In Chicago, the Detroit Tigers blew a six-run lead in the eighth but fought back to claim their first victory of the season, a wild 8-7 win over the Chicago White Sox.

Melvin Nieves drove in three runs, including an RBI double in the top of the 10th inning for the Tigers.

The Tigers scored five

runs in the top of the eighth to build a seemingly safe 7-1 lead, but the bumbling Detroit Bullpen allowed six runs in the bottom half, allowing the White Sox to tie it 7-7.

Detroit got a rare great performance from a starting pitcher. Rookie Ehler gave up a run and four hits in 6 2/3 innings.

In Seattle, the Boston Red Sox outthrew the Seattle Mariners to post a 10-5 victory.

Former Mariner Darro Bragg hit two homers in a game for the first time in his career and Tim Lincecum added a three-run blast. Mike Stanley also homered as nine of Boston's 10 runs came on homers.

Edgar Martinez and Ken Griffey Jr. homered for Seattle, which has allowed 26 runs and 29 hits in its last two games.

At Minnesota, Tim Lincecum allowed one run

over 7 2/3 innings and Bip Roberts had a run-scoring single off hard-luck loser Bob Tewkesbury as the Kansas City Royals handed the Minnesota Twins their first loss of the season 2-1.

At Texas, Brady Anderson had four hits and highlighted a three-run seventh with a two-run single as the Baltimore Orioles overcame a four-run deficit and remained the league's lone unbeaten team with a 5-4 victory over the Texas Rangers.

In Toronto, Otis Nixon and Ed Sprague delivered RBI singles in the sixth inning and last year's era leader Juan Guzman combined with two relievers on a five-hitter, leading the Toronto Blue Jays to a 6-2 win over the Milwaukee Brewers.

Benito Santiago delivered a two-run double and Joe Carter homered for the Blue Jays.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMMAM HIRSH
Original Authors: Victor Goren, Inc.

AN OPEN BOOK

Both vulnerable. East deals.

NORTH
♠ 8 5
♥ K 9 3
♦ A K J 9
♣ J 9 8 2

WEST
♠ J 5
♥ 7 6 5
♦ 8 8 3
♣ 7 6 5 3

EAST
♠ K Q 10 9 4 2
♥ A 8 4
♦ 9 4
♣ 10 4

SOUTH
♠ A 7 8
♥ Q J 10 3
♦ 10 7 2
♣ A K Q

The bidding: SOUTH WEST NORTH
1 ♠ 1 NT Pass Pass
Pass Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Jack of ♠.

When the information you have available tells you that normal methods will not succeed, try a different tack. This deal illustrates what we mean.

With a four-card heart suit and only one stopper in spades, South contemplated making a takeout double rather than bidding one no trump. But the lack of a distributional feature swayed South to the

letter, and North had an easy raise to game.

West led the jack of spades, and prospects were grim. The normal way to establish nine tricks would be to force out the ace of hearts, but that was doomed to fail. East had to have all the missing cards to open the bidding, so the defenders would take at least four spade tricks and the ace of hearts before declarer regained the lead to cash another trick.

There was another route to nine tricks. If declarer could take four diamond tricks, those winners, together with four club tricks and the ace of spades, would bring in the requisite number. However, the normal play of the diamond finesse could not succeed — the queen was surely with East. Therefore, declarer had to take the anti-percentage line of trying to drop her majesty.

Even so, a modicum of care was needed. If declarer cavalantly played off the diamond winners, the jack of clubs would wither on the vine. Therefore, declarer unbalanced the high clubs from hand, crossed to the king of diamonds and cashed the ace. When the queen came tumbling down, nine tricks were in the bag.

Advertisement

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Mr. Rami Abu Shakra, the General Manager of Abu Shakra Trading Agency, introduced Chanel N°5 in its new and splendid pack by saying:

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Ekeus says Iraq failed to answer queries on its warfare potential

UNSCOM chairman accuses Baghdad of endangering U.N. monitoring flights

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. disarmament envoy Rolf Ekeus said Saturday he failed to learn much more about Iraq's chemical and germ warfare potential during a three-day mission here and accused the Iraqis of endangering U.N. monitoring flights.

Mr. Ekeus, chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), said he had asked the Iraqis to stop undermining his commission's operations to ensure Iraq is not resuming its banned weapons programmes.

"In recent times we have seen a serious deterioration in Iraqi performance" with its compliance on monitoring, he said. "We have seen a tendency to block, undercut, make our helicopter operations dangerous."

Mr. Ekeus, who held three days of talks with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and other officials, said continued interference threatened to undermine the monitoring system required under U.N. resolutions ending the 1991 Gulf war.

"We got a very understanding response from the Iraqi side," he added.

The former Swedish diplomat also said that during his talks "we didn't solve any substantive issues" on chemical and biological weapons. "We have a bit to go there, as we do with chemicals," he said.

UNSCOM says it fears Iraq has retained VX nerve gas and anthrax biological agents because it has received no accounting of their destruction from Iraq.

Although he gave a "dark presentation," he said the two sides outlined a plan to tackle the outstanding concerns on germ warfare and described the atmosphere of the talks as "cordial" and "very constructive."

Mr. Ekeus reported after beginning high-level chemical talks here in February that Iraq had failed to account for the destruction



Rolf Ekeus

of 3,800 kilogrammes of VX nerve gas.

Iraq maintained it destroyed the entire quantity in January following the 1991 Gulf war to free Kuwait, Mr. Ekeus told reporters March 3 after giving a closed-door briefing to the U.N. Security Council.

The U.N. disarmament chief said: "It is a clear threat against the region" if such chemical agents were retained in the Iraqi arsenal.

The 15 members of the Security Council renewed the international economic sanctions against Iraq for another two months.

Mr. Ekeus will include the results of this visit in his six-monthly report to the U.N. Security Council on April 11.

Meanwhile Iraq's official Al Jomhuriyah newspaper accused Mr. Ekeus of bias, but still had a chance to save a reputation as a neutral weapons expert if he admitted Iraq has met all its disarmament obligations.

Al Jomhuriyah said Mr. Ekeus in 1995 started publicly to abandon his neutral role as a technical expert and become a biased politician, visiting countries that have nothing to do with his mandate, like Kuwait and Israel.

Oil and trade sanctions were imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Under U.N. resolutions ending the Gulf war, Iraq must satisfy UNSCOM it has scrapped its programmes for weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles before the sanctions can be lifted.

During Mr. Ekeus' last mission, Iraq dropped its objections to the removal of scrapped missile engines for analysis overseas to determine if Iraq has also retained long-range missiles.

The parts were shipped to the United States and elsewhere for analysis and results will be made public after consultation with the Iraqis, Mr. Ekeus meanwhile declined to comment on Sweden's ambassador to Washington and leave UNSCOM after six years at his post.



"Islamic" dolls on display with an Iranian flag and a portrait of the late Ayatollah Khomeini at Tehran, created to counter the influence of the American Barbie and Ken dolls (AFP photo)

Syria questions U.S. role as peace sponsor

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria on Saturday questioned whether the United States could remain an honest broker of the Middle East peace process while it continued to give Israel military aid.

"Has the United States given up on their initiative to bring a just and global peace to the Middle East?" asked the official Tishrin Daily, accusing Washington of following a policy of appeasement towards Israel. "The U.S. puts their military arsenal at Israel's disposal unconditionally," during a visit to Washington by Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai earlier this week, added the paper.

The Pentagon said Thursday that it was stepping up investment in two U.S.-Israeli anti-missile defence programmes and a joint security programme aimed at maintaining Israel's military edge over its Arab neighbours. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected in Washington on Monday for talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton about the ongoing crisis in the peace process over Israel's decision to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Tishrin said it was "likely Netanyahu's visit next week to Washington will also centre on further military gains... even though Netanyahu is in the process of destroying the American peace initiative and five years of intense (peace) efforts."

Arabs seek ban on Israeli groups tied to settlements

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Arab states on Friday were working on a General Assembly resolution that would recommend all countries bar any assistance to, or commercial dealings with, Israeli groups involved in settlement activities in occupied territories.

The resolution would be submitted to an emergency special session of the 185-nation assembly requested by Arab countries in response to the start of work by Israel on a new Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem.

The special session is being called under a 1950 "uniting for peace" formula that enables an issue to be transferred to the assembly if a veto prevents the Security Council from taking action.

The United States used its council veto twice last month to block resolutions calling on Israel to abandon its building plan. While Washington said it opposed Israel's action, it contended that the United Nations was not the appropriate body for dealing with issues that should be settled directly between Palestinians and Israelis.

U.N. rules require the emergency assembly session to be convened 24 hours after a simple majority of members tell Secretary-General Kofi Annan they support the request for the session.

Diplomats say the meeting is likely to take place late next week, after meetings in New Delhi of the 113-member Non-Aligned Movement that is certain to back the Arab move.

The resolution being drafted would condemn Israel's construction on Jabal Abu Ghneim and "all other illegal Israeli actions

in all the occupied territories" and demand an immediate halt.

Assembly resolutions are not binding and only the Security Council can impose mandatory sanctions.

The draft, in its present form, would recommend that "all states prevent the provision of assistance by their governmental agencies and their nationals to, or the conduct of trade or financial dealings with, Israeli commercial, private or public establishments that are involved in activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, which are in violation" of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and are contrary to relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Fourth Geneva Convention, whose application to the territories Israel occupied in 1967 has been repeatedly affirmed by the council, bars settlements in occupied lands.

The resolution would also recommend that the states that are parties to the convention — the vast majority of U.N. members — "take other appropriate measures, on a national or regional level," to ensure respect by Israel of the convention.

The U.N. secretary-general would be asked to "dispatch a team of U.N. observers to the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and to submit a report on the implementation of this resolution" within two months of its adoption.

The emergency special session would be adjourned temporarily, subject to resumption at the request of U.N. members.

A similar special session in 1980 on the question of Palestine was reconvened in 1982 and still has not been formally closed.

Syria reportedly refused to help Saudis seize blast 'mastermind' Canadian arrest of Saudi suspect said to undermine U.S. intention

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Syrian authorities refused to help Saudi Arabia capture the dissident identified as the mastermind behind a bombing months before the last killed 19 U.S. airmen in Dhahran, the Washington Post reported Saturday.

Citing "Arab sources and court documents," the daily said the Saudi government was hunting Ahmad Ibrahim Mughassil in connection with the earlier bombing of a U.S. military facility in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia suspected that Mughassil, a member of the Hizbollah group, was planning further attacks, the paper said.

Mughassil was with the Hizbollah militia in Lebanon, a country dominated by neighbouring Syria, which declined to help capture him because it did not want to trigger a clash with the group, the paper quoted Arab sources as saying.

Mughassil, who remains at large, has been identified by Canadian security officials as "the mastermind" behind the June 25 truck-bomb explosion at the U.S. military residence Khobar Towers in Dhahran, according to the paper.

The Canadian security officials listed Mughassil in court papers filed in the case of another Dhahran suspect, Hani Abdul Rahim Sayegh.

Sayegh was arrested in Canada last August and is currently facing a deportation hearing. The Arab sources believe Mughassil is now in Iran, the paper said.

U.S. reported unhappy at Canadian arrest

Canada's arrest of Sayegh may have hurt the U.S. probe into the bombing, the Los Angeles Times reported on Friday.

The newspaper said American officials were frustrated at the decision by Canadian authorities to arrest Sayegh, foiling U.S. investigators' efforts to use him as a major independent lead in probing the Khobar Towers bombing.

The decision also thwarted U.S. hopes that Sayegh would provide a richer trove of intelligence regarding individuals, groups and countries that might have played a role in the attack in Dhahran, the Times quoted unnamed officials as saying.

Because of the Canadian action, the United States has not taken any legal steps against Sayegh, and none is in the works, according to law enforcement sources cited in the Times.

"Hard evidence is needed for probable cause and it's not there," the paper quoted one official as saying.

"We don't think he's a dry hole, but we don't have enough information on him and now we're not likely to get it," the official added.

Canadian authorities say Sayegh engaged in surveillance of the Khobar Towers and drove one of two cars that accompanied the explosives-laden truck.

But the Times quoted the source as saying U.S. officials were concerned about the validity of the claim, given that much of it came from "uncollaborated information" from Saudi Arabia, based either on interrogation of dissidents detained indefinitely or on "incentives."

"People come out of the woodwork with information when you offer to pay or threaten," the Times' source said.

Sanaa gunman executed in public

SANAA (AFP) — A gunman who shot dead six people in a bloody rampage at two Yemeni schools was executed at the scene of the crime Saturday in front of thousands of onlookers.

Mohammad Misseh Al Nadhiri stood impassively with his eyes half-closed as a single soldier fired five bullets at him at a location between the two schools where the massacre was carried out six days earlier.

After the execution, the crowds shouted "long live justice."

President Ali Abdullah Saleh earlier rejected a last ditch appeal for clemency from Nadhiri, whose death sentence was confirmed by an appeals court on Thursday, said a senior official who asked to remain anonymous.

Nadhiri, a 42-year-old building contractor and militant who fought against Soviet troops in Afghanistan, was first convicted of the killings on Monday — 24 hours after he rampaged through two schools firing a Kalashnikov assault rifle at teachers and pupils.

However, officials told AFP on Friday that the execution would take place in a central square and not at the scene of the killings "so as not to terrorize the students," who have school on Saturday and can therefore not attend.

An appeals court upheld the death sentence on Wednesday and said that because of the "particularly odious" nature of the crime Nadhiri should be crucified after execution.

A supreme court of appeal

on Thursday upheld the death sentence but threw out the order that Nadhiri's body be nailed to a cross.

Nadhiri has said he carried out the bloody rampage to avenge the rape of his eight-year-old daughter by an administrator at the Taleah school, where he began his shooting spree on Sunday.

The court rejected his defence after a medical examination of his daughter.

Four of Nadhiri's five children including daughter Hitaf, the victim of the alleged sexual assault, accompanied their father during the rampage.

According to neighbors, Nadhiri was critical of the mixing of boys and girls in schools and took it upon himself to "purify society."

Israel's cricket team leaves Malaysia after violent clash

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — The Israel cricket team flew home Saturday after their appearance here sparked a violent clash between riot police and anti-Israeli protesters a day earlier.

An official from the International Cricket Council (ICC) trophy organiser told AFP the team left early Saturday after losing their last match here against Argentina for 21st placing but declined to give details.

Sports officials earlier said Israel's attendance was a precondition for allowing Malaysia to host the ICC trophy.

Hundreds of Malaysians led by the Muslim Party Islam (PAS) and students on Friday demonstrated outside the suburban campus of the University of Malaysia opposing Israel's presence and aiming to disrupt the Israel-Argentina match.

But the ICC organisers, who earlier received a tip-off on the protest, had transferred the game to other grounds.

Riot police then used water cannons and batons to disperse the crowd, who fought back with rocks and pieces of paving stones before being driven back.

Some 250 protesters were arrested, including more than 100 who had sought refuge in a mosque and were rounded up

when police entered the complex after a six-hour siege.

Predominantly Muslim Malaysia has no diplomatic ties with Israel but they have limited trade relations. Muslim protesters say allowing Israel to send a sporting team here could preface diplomatic recognition of Israel.

The university's Undergraduate Association said that "Israel is a race cursed by Allah and inviting them here means bringing God's catastrophe into Malaysia."

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, who was visiting the PAS-governed state of Kelantan, the country's only sole-opposition state, had dismissed the protest as "sheer stupidity" that would not benefit the Palestinian struggle.

Mr. Mahathir slammed the demonstrators for taking advantage of the government because "they know that in Malaysia if they demonstrate, they do not get shot."

Kuala Lumpur Chief of Police Ismail Che Ros told Reuters no one was injured in the fracas.

The demonstrators would be charged with unlawful assembly, he said. Demonstrations are technically illegal in Malaysia.

Malaysia is a strong supporter of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and a vocal critic of Israel, closely monitoring developments on the Middle East peace talks.

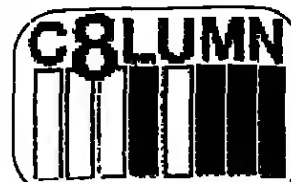
Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was reported Saturday to have urged members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference to review ties with Israel following Tel Aviv's recent move to build Jewish settlements on Arab land.

Mr. Abdullah said the action clearly violated the rights of the Palestinians and undermined the already shaky peace accord between Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the Israeli government.

He blamed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the deteriorating condition in the Middle East and slammed his stubbornness for refusing to retreat despite international condemnation.

Malaysia does not have official relations with Israel as a protest against Tel Aviv's alleged oppression of the Palestinians.

It gives moral and financial support to the PNA, which enjoys full diplomatic status in Kuala Lumpur.



Nude skier off-piste after 10,000 franc fine

ANNECY (AFP) — A nude French skier was brought down to earth with a bump Saturday, fined 10,000 francs for appearing on the slopes last month wearing just skis, sunglasses, backpack and a smile. The man, a 49-year-old sales representative with a history of sexual exhibitionism, was fined by a court in the town of Bonneville after appearing nude on the pistes at Praz-de-Lys in the Alpine Haute Savoie region on March 18. He was arrested after stopping in front of four women skiers and masturbating. The man, who was arrested in 1986 for exhibitionism, explained to the police that he had simply "got too hot" on the slopes. He was found to have a collection of pornographic magazines and erotica in his car. The state prosecutor had asked that the man, who authorities declined to name, be given a suspended two months in prison and a 5,000 franc fine.

TV movie on X-cult survivor

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — The suicide of 39 Heaven's Gate cult members in a southern California mansion could be the subject of a television movie based on the story of a former member. Under an agreement signed by ABC Television network and two Los Angeles companies, Kushner-Locke Co. and Interact Entertainment, the screenplay will be based on the true story of Richard Ford, whose cult name was Rio D'Angelo. Ford had left the cult several months before the March 26 mass suicides and tipped off the police after finding the bodies in the rented mansion in the upscale community of Rancho Santa Fe.

Van Damme admits costly drug use

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Action movie hero Jean-Claude Van Damme has admitted that his cocaine habit was costing him \$8,000 a week last year, USA Today reported. "It was the worst year of my life, 1996," said Belgian-born Van Damme, who was ingesting "four to five grammes a day" before he checked into a California detoxification center to kick his addiction to both cocaine and sleeping pills. Saying he now sleeps "like a baby," Van Damme has been reconciled with his fourth wife, Darcy Lapiere, the mother of his son Nicolas, two-and-a-half.

Julie Andrews sued

NEW YORK (AFP) — A U.S. insurance company is suing actress Julie Andrews on the grounds she lied about her medical history when she applied for an insurance policy for the show "Victor/Victoria," the Wall Street Journal said. Andrews, 61, who starred in the sugar-coated movie "Mary Poppins," purchased the policy from Lexington Insurance Co. in March 1995 for a premium of \$157,985 to protect the production from financial losses if she missed appearances, the daily said. She missed 10 performances of the Broadway musical because of a sore throat, 21 performances because of a gallbladder operation and a handful more because of a bad larynx, according to the suit filed in a New York state court. The insurers rescinded her policy because she denied that she had ever suffered from a variety of disorders of the throat and respiratory system or from ailments related to the back, bones or joints, Andrews' spokesman said the actress could not comment on the suit because she was in "vocal rest," the newspaper said.